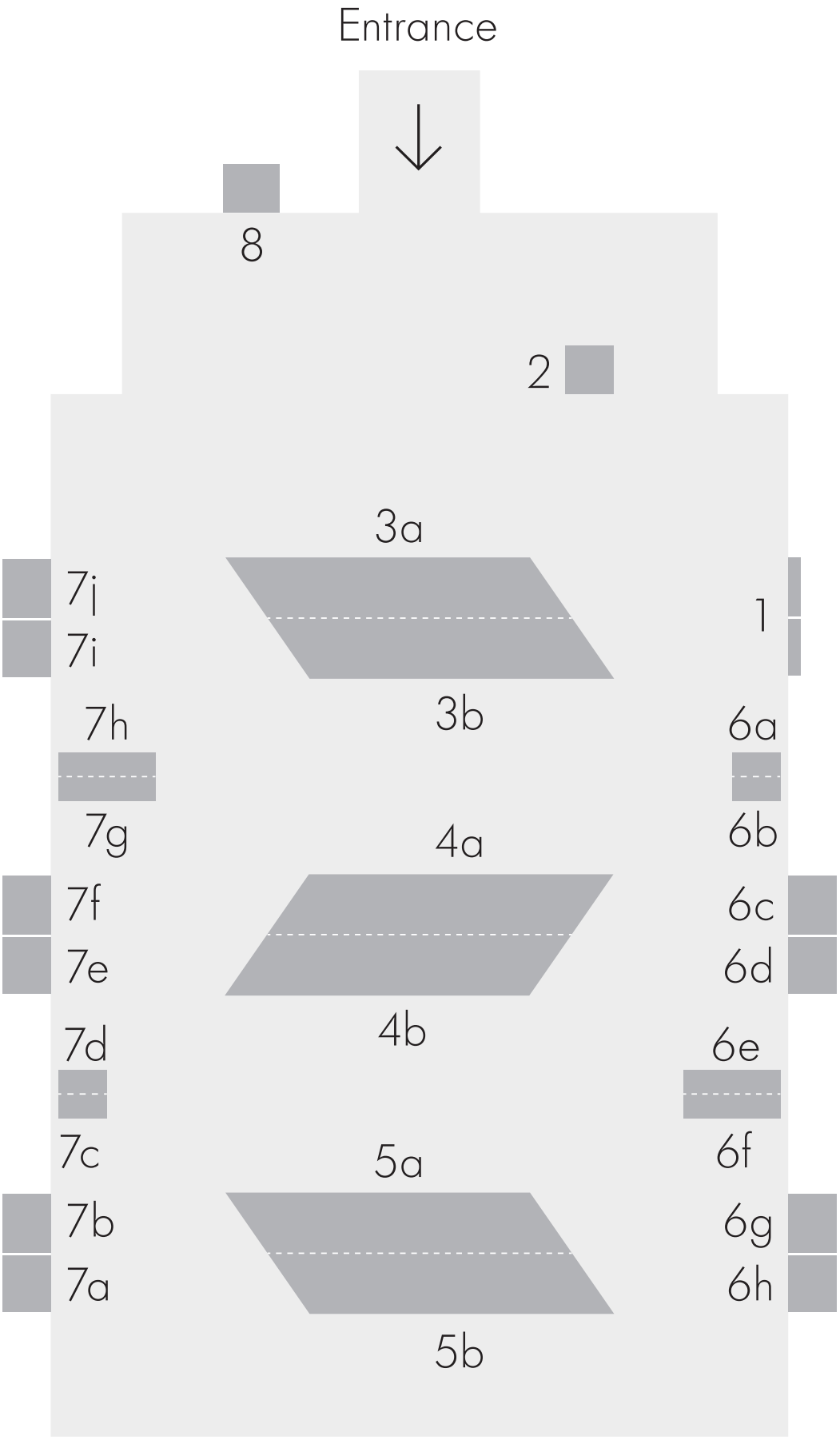
The Waddesdon Bequest

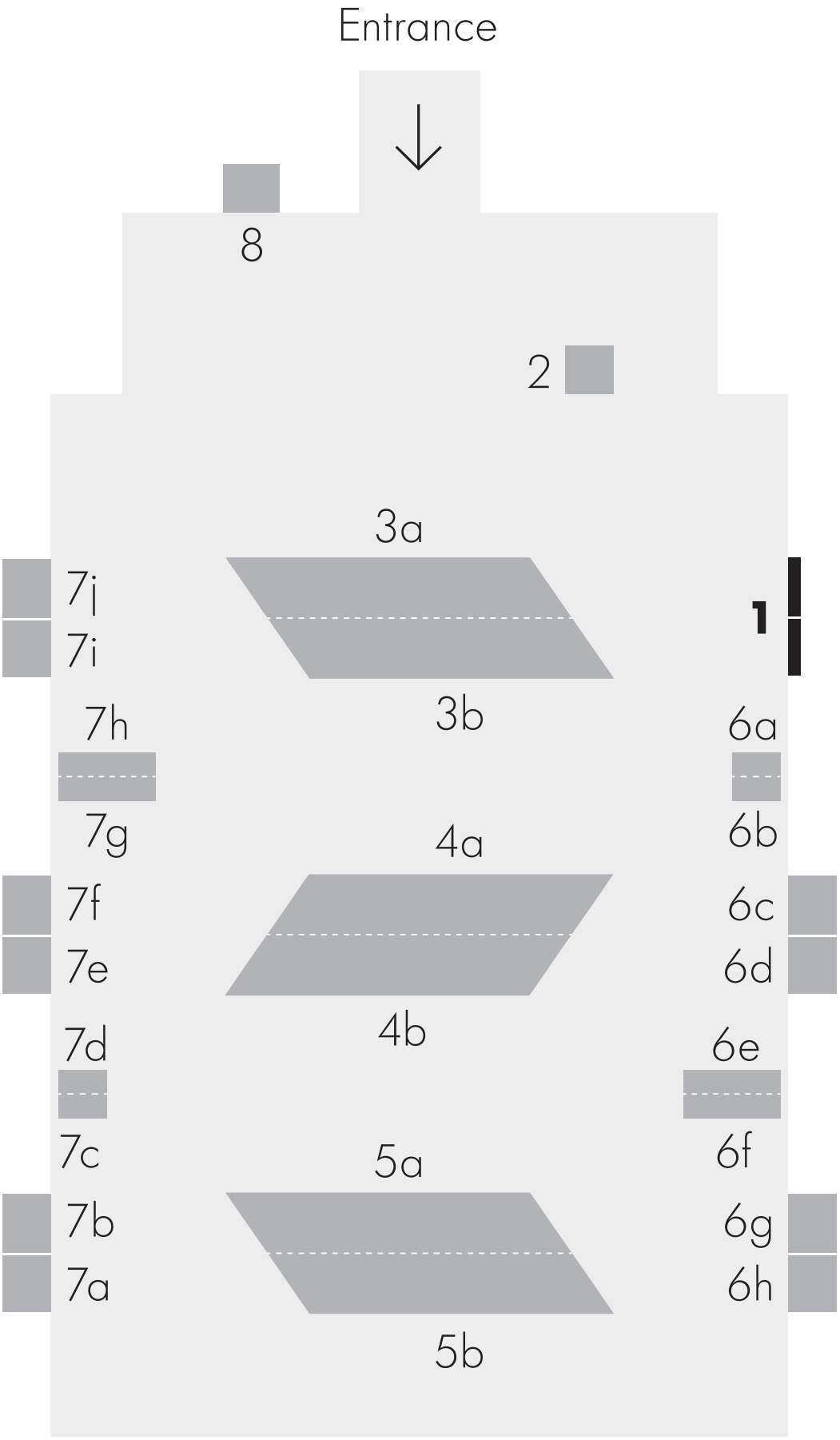
Funded by
The Rothschild Foundation

Contents

Section 1	5
Section 2	9
Section 3a	13
Section 3b	27
Section 4a	43
Section 4b	61
Section 5a	75
Section 5b	91
Section 6a	101
Section 6b	103
Section 6c	107
Section 6d	113
Section 6e	119
Section 6f	123
Section 6g	129
Section 6h	135
Section 7a	141
Section 7b	145
Section 7c	149
Section 7d	151
Section 7e	153
Section 7f	157
Section 7g	163
Section 7h	169
Section 7i	173
Section 7j	179
Section 8	187


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Section 1


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

The Waddesdon Bequest is a collection of outstanding quality generously bequeathed to the British Museum in 1898 by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild MP (1839–1898). It is a family collection, formed by a father and son: Baron Anselm von Rothschild (1803–1874) of Frankfurt and Vienna, and Baron Ferdinand, who became a British citizen in 1860, and a Trustee of the British Museum in 1896. Named after Baron Ferdinand's Renaissance-style château, Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire, the Bequest is a 19th-century recreation of a princely *Kunstkammer* or 'art chamber' of the Renaissance. The collection demonstrates how, within two generations, the Rothschilds expanded from Frankfurt to become Europe's leading banking dynasty. It reflects the way in which they enhanced their power and status through discerning collecting.

The New Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor, where this collection was originally displayed by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, photographed in 1897 and showing objects in the Bequest.

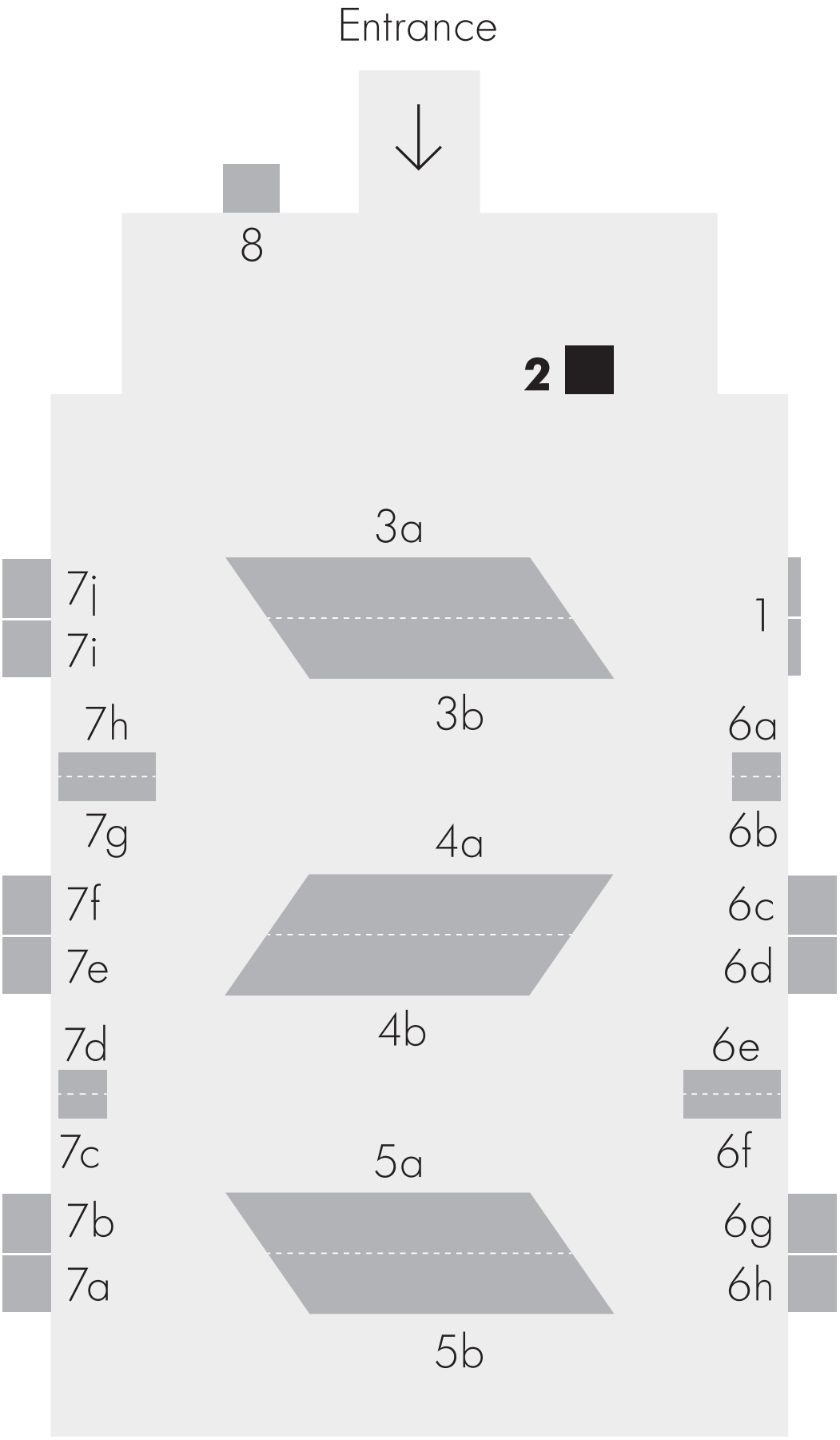
Waddesdon Manor is managed by the Rothschild Foundation on behalf of the National Trust. It is open to the public and can still be visited as a Rothschild creation.

© The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

‘The collector of genuine works of the Renaissance might be likened to the child who cries for the moon.’

Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, 1892

Section 2


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

The Holy Thorn Reliquary

Enamelled gold, sapphires, rubies and pearls
Paris, about 1400

This reliquary was made to contain a thorn, supposedly from the Crown of Thorns that was placed on Christ's head before the Crucifixion. The armorial enamelled plaques in the base show that it was made for Jean, duc de Berry (1340–1416). The Crown of Thorns itself was a French royal relic, housed in its own chapel in Paris. Individual thorns were detached to make precious reliquary jewels.

WB.67

The Holy Thorn Reliquary

Made to display a thorn, supposedly from the Crown of Thorns worn by Christ at the Crucifixion. The reliquary was made in Paris around 1400 for Jean, duc de Berry (1340–1416). It was listed as being in the Viennese treasury of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1544. In 1860 it was sent to Salomon Weininger for repair. He returned a replica. The original was later acquired by Baron Ferdinand's father. Details of the forgery and substitution only surfaced in the 1920s.

WB.67

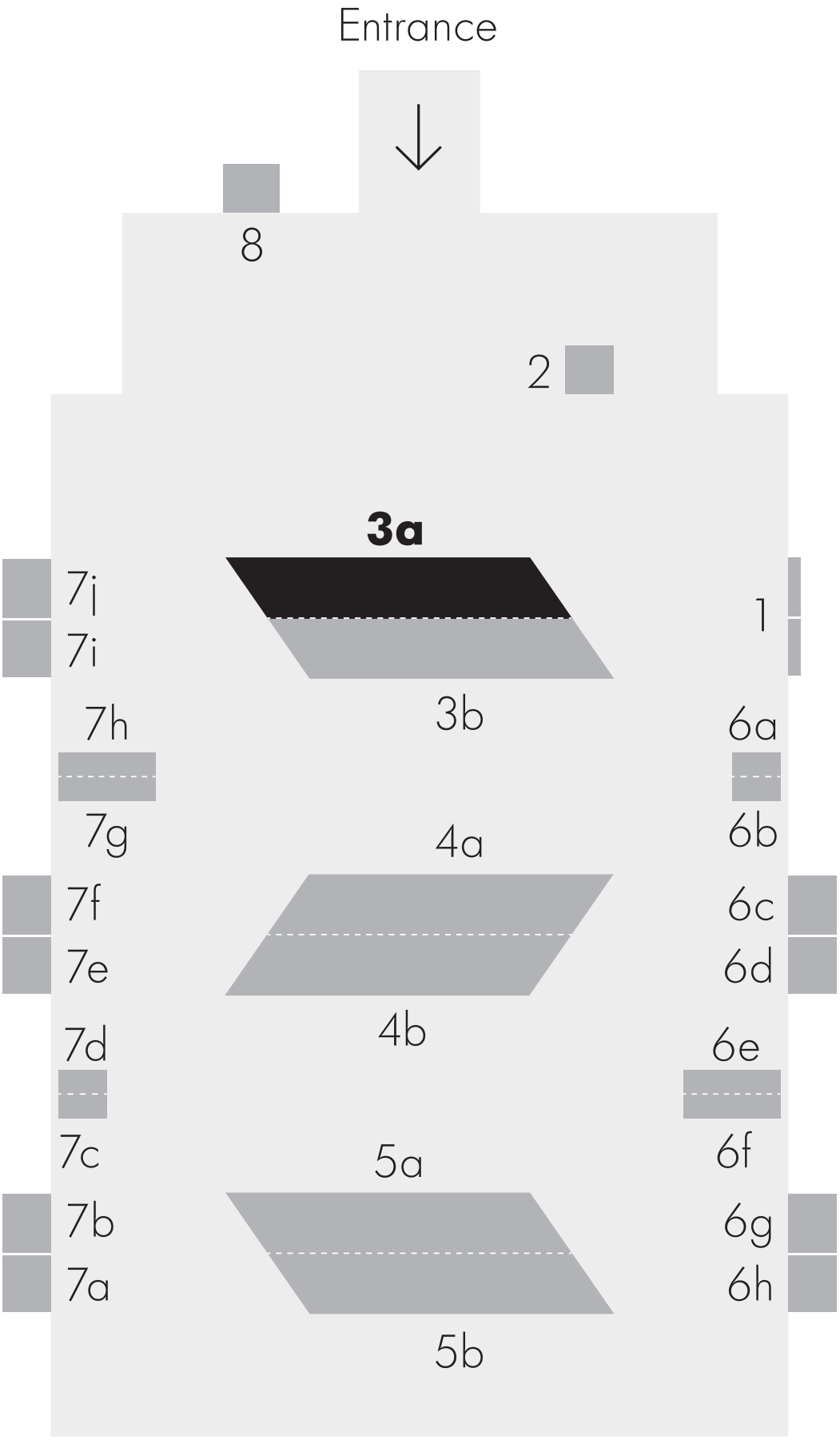
‘My dearly beloved relations continue purchasing artistic wonders. Oddly enough they never admire each other’s purchases, and while extolling their own discrimination, ridicule the follies committed by others.’

Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, 1884

Overhead projection: Waddesdon Manor in Baron Ferdinand’s time and today

© The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor (Red Book photo: Mike Fear)
© bpk/Kunstbibliothek, SMB/Dietmar Katz
© Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans

Section 3a


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Casket of St Valerie

Wood, *champlevé* enamel on copper
Limoges, France, about 1170

Perhaps made to hold relics of St Valerie, whose martyrdom it commemorates. She was a Roman governor's daughter who converted to Christianity. She refused to marry her former fiancé after taking a vow of chastity. At her execution she miraculously caught her own severed head and presented it to St Martial (front right and lid). Her executioner was struck dead by God's avenging arrow (top left).

WB.19

2 Two stag cups

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, 1550–1600, altered before 1866
Mark: Christoph Erhard (altered 1800s)

Towards 1600 there was a fashion for silver drinking vessels in the form of animals and birds. The Rothschilds enjoyed hunting on their estates and they collected cups in the form of game. Baron Ferdinand remembered as a child seeing 'some quaint Nuremberg or Augsburg tankard, or the figure of a man, a lion or a stag' on offer to his father.

WB.136 and WB.137

3 The Ulm book covers

Silver and parcel gilt
Ulm, southern Germany, about 1506
Circle of Daniel Mauch

The book covers are rare survivors of the Reformation. They decorated the Book of Epistles and the Gospels on the altar of the Gothic Minster in Ulm. The Epistles cover (3a) has the symbols of the four Evangelists with St Antony the Hermit and St Vincent. The Gospels cover (3b) has the Virgin and Child with St Martin, Bishop of Tours, and the Empress Helena.

WB.88 and WB.87

4 Cabinet

Wood, iron damascened in gold and silver
Milan, 1554–1581, altered before 1898

This theatrical cabinet takes the form of a stage set. Set within its architecture are drawers and miniature statues. Damascening was a speciality of Milanese armourers. Cabinets like this were important display pieces for collectors in Paris and London around 1850–1900. This one was a focal point in the New Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor.

WB.16

5 Griffin claw cup

Horn, silver-gilt mounts
Mainz, Germany, 1541–83
Mark: Lorenz and Hans Faust

Supposedly a claw of the mythical griffin, half-eagle, half-lion, who speaks in German on the lip: 'A griffin's claw I am called, in Asia, Arabia I am well known'. The cup is made from a buffalo horn, set on a claw to resemble the griffin's talon. This one was made for the von Greiffenclau family who took their name and arms from the griffin.

WB.102

6 Sand glass

Silver-gilt mounts
South German (?) 1450–1500, altered 1800–1898

WB.223

7 Rock-crystal tankard

Rock-crystal, silver-gilt
London, 1800–1896, re-used rock-crystal

WB.124

8 Rock-crystal cup

Rock-crystal, silver-gilt
North German or Baltic, 1600–25

WB.123

9 Panel; Diane de Poitiers

Painted enamel
Limoges, France, about 1600
Mark: 'F. L.' (in gold),
possibly François Limosin

King Henri II's mistress is shown as Diana, classical goddess of hunting. Her monogram appears on the white hound beneath her foot and in the centre of her name. The romance of the French Renaissance court appealed to the Rothschilds, who specialised in collecting Limoges enamelled portraits of this type.

WB.39

10 Two bronze door knockers

Cast bronze
Venice, Italy, 1550–1600

One (10b) shows Neptune with two seahorses and a shield of arms. The other (10a) is one of two designed for the massive doors of the Palazzo Martinengo Dobblo in Brescia. It is made up of two bound satyrs on dolphins, supporting a shield with the initials 'G. C.'.

WB.4 and WB.3

11 Pair of vases

Tin-glazed ceramic (*maiolica*) with gilt-brass (*ormolu*) mounts
Urbino, Italy, workshop of Orazio Fontana
1565–71, mounted in Paris 1760–5

One shows river gods in a landscape. Hercules and Deianira appear on the other. One is signed for a famous ceramic workshop in Urbino whose wares were hunted down by collectors. As mounted ceramics, these were star pieces for Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill in the 1760s and later for Baron Ferdinand at Waddesdon Manor.

WB.61.a and WB.61.b

A family collection

Collecting was a family activity for the Rothschild banking dynasty. The Waddesdon Bequest is the creation of a father and son: Baron Anselm (1803–1874) of Frankfurt and Vienna, and Baron Ferdinand (1839–1898), who became a British citizen in 1860. The collection was formed on the fast-growing art markets of Frankfurt, Vienna, London and Paris. As a treasury of intricate, precious objects it was modelled on the art collections formed by princes and nobles in the courts of Renaissance Europe. It shows the rise of the Rothschilds as a new European aristocracy.

12 Seychelles nut ewer

Nut (*Lodoicea maldivica*),
silver-gilt mounts
Augsburg (?) 1575–1600

Formed from half of a double coconut palm from the Seychelles, East Indian Ocean. 'Sea nuts' were brought to Europe by the Portuguese from the 1550s and were valued as antidotes to poison. They quickly found their way into court collections. The Rothschilds may have added the figure of Jupiter before 1866 to 'improve' the object for display.

WB.125

13 Hanse tankard

Silver-gilt
Lübeck, Germany, 1622
Mark: Englebrecht Becker II

This form of tankard (*Hansekanne*) was popular with wealthy merchants in the Hanseatic trading cities of the Baltic. The arms of the city of Riga, Latvia, inside the lid are a later addition which suggest that the tankard was part of that city's collection of silver plate.

WB.128

14 The Tucher cups

Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, Germany, about 1568
Mark: Christoph Lindenberger

Under each foot are the arms of the powerful Tucher family of Nuremberg, and an inscription in memory of Leonhart Tucher (died 1568). Baron Ferdinand's father was offered the pair in the 1830s. He bought one, which Baron Ferdinand later inherited. Alfred Rothschild inherited the other and generously gave it to Baron Ferdinand to unite the pair.

WB.101.a and WB.101.b

15 Tankard

Silver-gilt mounts
Silver-gilt
Berlin (?) about 1830–70

WB.130

Curiosities

These ostrich egg cups are exotic natural objects made into treasures for collectors by European goldsmiths. '*Artificialia*', combining nature and art, were a vital element in the courtly collections (*Kunstkammern*) of Renaissance and baroque Europe. Baron Ferdinand loved 'curiosities': shells, nuts, amber or horn enriched by human artistry. He inherited the Seychelles nut (12) and the griffin claw (5) from his father but added to this part of the collection in the 1890s.

16 Ostrich egg cup

Ostrich shell, silver-gilt mounts
Nuremburg, 1550–75, workshop of Wenzel Jamnitzer, altered 1800–1898

WB.112

17 Ostrich egg cup

Ostrich shell, silver-gilt mounts
Prague, 1570–80, mark: 'A. K.'

WB.111

18 Ostrich egg powder flask

Ostrich shell, silver-gilt mounts
Augsburg, late 1587–99, mark: Hans IV Miller

WB.113

19 The Ghisi Shield

Hammered iron, silver-plated and damascened with gold
Antwerp, Belgium (?) signed by Giorgio Ghisi of Mantua, 1554

This shield is a display piece. Figures on the border symbolise Glory, Prudence, Fame and Strength. The design framework is in high relief, minutely engraved with scenes from the *Iliad*, Homer's epic of the Trojan wars. Playful children and satyrs are also picked out in gold. Ghisi has signed and dated the bridge above the central battle scene.

WB.5

20 Cup, peasant woman

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, about 1586–1625, mark: Elias Zorer

This peasant woman is modelled in silver, in the round. She trudges to market with a pannier on her back, and a bucket and staff. Her head can be removed so that her hollow body can be used as a cup. This figure is a rare survival of small sculpture in silver.

WB.132

21 Grape picker

Silver-gilt
Nuremburg, 1570–80, mark: Elias Lencker

A peasant, modelled in the round, bends under a heavy load. The surface has been carefully worked to convey subtle differences of texture. The Lenckers were goldsmiths who supplied the leading patrons in Europe around 1600. Sculptural figures in silver were rare and expensive. They appealed to Rothschild taste in collecting in the 19th century.

WB.133

22 Bacchus, god of wine

Silver-gilt, green turban shell (*Turbo marmoratus L.*)
Nuremburg, about 1590–1602, mark: Meinrad Bauch the Elder, shell from the Indo-Pacific

The drunken Bacchus sits on a wine barrel as a joking reminder of the dangers of drunkenness. Combining exotic pearly shell with silver sculpture, this figure typifies art designed for the courtly collections (*Kunstkammern*) of baroque Europe and was acquired by Baron Anselm Rothschild before 1838.

WB.131

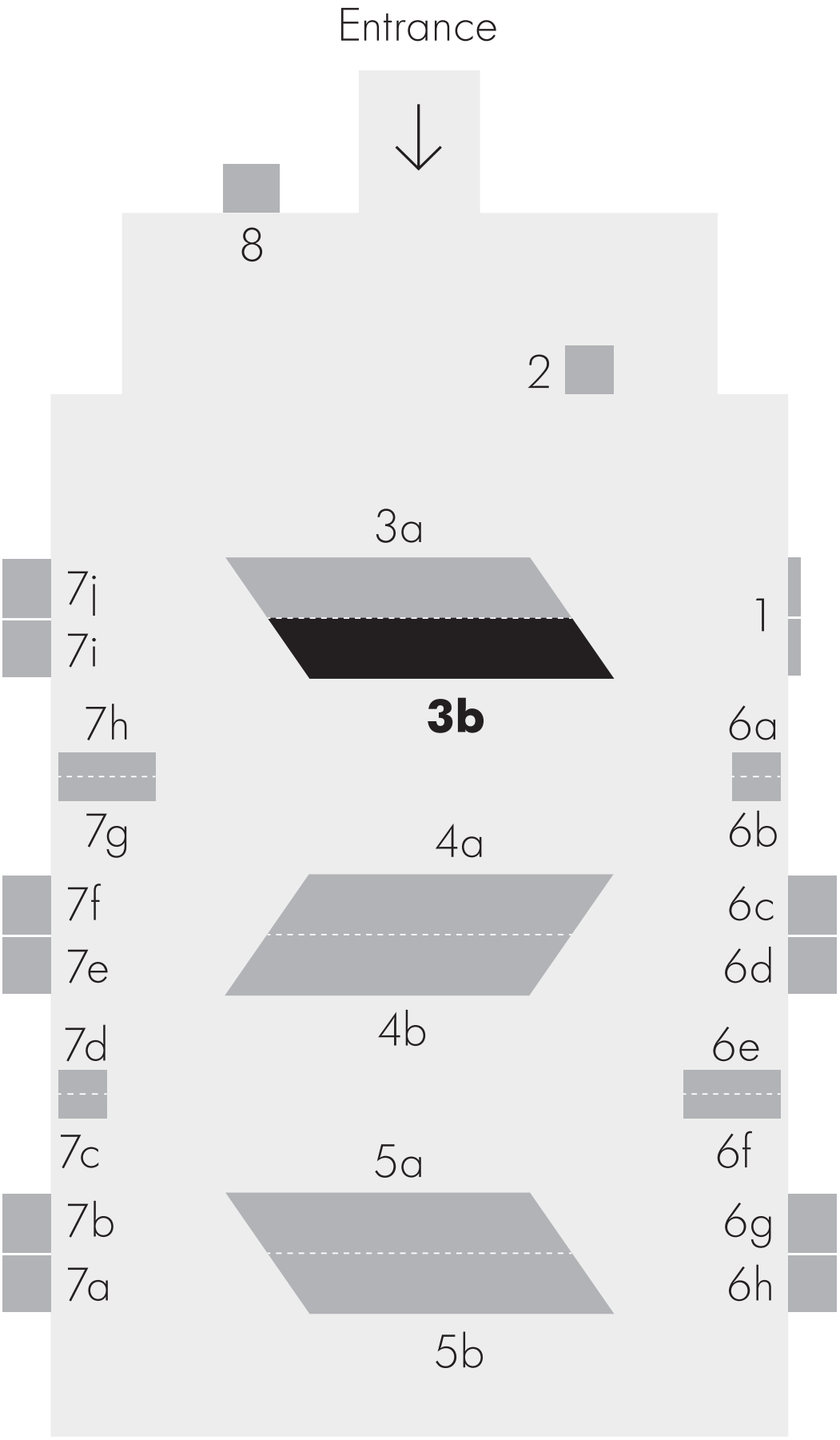
23 Huntsman automaton

Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, 1617–20, mark: Wolf Christoff Ritter

The huntsman walks into the forest with his dog to hunt wild boar. He is a rare survival of German drinking customs around 1600. Made for a drinking game, this huntsman was propelled by a clockwork mechanism in the base. The diner that the huntsman stopped in front of had to remove the head and drink all the wine from the hollow figure.

WB.134

Section 3b


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Ewer and basin

Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, 1610–25, altered 1870
Mark: Hieronimus Berckhaussen

A christening gift for Johann Moritz von Nassau-Siegen. It was made using money sent by his godfather Maurice, Prince of Orange, Stadtholder of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, whose arms are at the centre of the basin. The ewer was restored in 1870, and acquired by the Rothschilds before 1872.

WB.91 and WB.92

2 The Deblĭn cup

Glass, gilded and enamelled
Venice (Murano) 1450–1500

The form derives from silver standing cups. The coloured glass blobs (prunts) and gilding give this cup a jewelled, sculptural quality, making it a rare Rothschild treasure. The Czech inscription engraved on the foot shows that the Cup was used to toast guests at Deblĭn, in Moravia, near Brno (Czech Republic): 'Praise the Lord; drink cool wine to the health of Deblĭn'.

WB.57

3 Mosque lamp

Glass, gilded and enamelled
Syria or Egypt, 1350–1400

Mamluk patrons commissioned lamps to hang in mosques and other public places. In Islamic tradition they are both symbolic and practical. The Arabic inscription reads: 'Glory to our Lord the sultan, the king, the wise, the just, the warrior'. Lamps were fashionable collectors' pieces in orientalist interiors in Europe from around 1860, particularly in smoking rooms.

WB.54

Dining and display

Tall standing cups were virtuoso pieces made by master goldsmiths. They were used by nobles, merchants, guilds and civic institutions as 'Welcome' cups (*Wilkomm*) to toast guests. Double cups, which fit together on top of one another, (5, 6) were wedding gifts between noble families. They were special commissions and represent considerable investment in silver. The Bequest has a remarkable group of these collectors' pieces.

4 **Grape cup (*Traubenpokal*)**
Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, about 1600, alterations
Mark: Hans Petzolt

WB.103

5 **Double cup**
Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, Germany, about 1550
Mark: Hans Brabant

WB.110

6 **Double cup**
Silver-gilt
Augsburg, Germany, 1575–1600
Mark: Kornelius Erb

WB.109

7 **Lobed cup (*knorret*)**
Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, Germany, about 1620
Mark: Michael Müller

WB.105

8 Enamelled cup
Silver-gilt, enamelled, nielloed
Flemish or German, about 1550
Mark: unidentified maker

WB.100

9 Cup with Apollo
Silver-gilt
Perhaps Strasbourg, 1575–1600,
later finial

WB.108

10 Lobed cup with animal trophies
Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, Germany, about 1600–1634
Jacob Stoer

WB.106

11 Nautilus shell cup
Silver-gilt, shell (*Nautilus pompilius*)
Marked: Dresden, Germany, 1741

An exotic shell has been carved and mounted on a figure of Neptune for a collector.

WB.117

12 Salt cellar

Silver-gilt, scallop and cockle shells
London, before 1857; whale 1575–1600
David Falcke, London dealer, before 1857

Though acquired as genuine, a dealer in fact concocted this object from old and new parts.

WB.143

13 Pair of vases

Tin-glazed ceramic (*maiolica*) with gilt-brass (*ormolu*) mounts
Urbino, Italy, workshop of Orazio Fontana
1560–70, mounted in Paris 1760–65

On one vase, Hercules embraces Deianira having rescued her from the centaur, Nessus. On the other a god pours a river, which flows over the foot. Maiolica painted with stories based on prints (*istoriato*) was attractive to later collectors. The ormolu mounts added to the appeal of these vases for Horace Walpole and then Baron Ferdinand.

WB.61.a and WB.61.b

Hercules and Deianira

Print by Giovanni Giacomo Caraglio
(about 1500–1565)
After Perino del Vaga (1501–1547)

© Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

A model for collecting

The Rothschilds were among the greatest collectors of the 19th century. They valued virtuosity and demonstrated discernment and a sense of history in selecting their treasures. Baron Ferdinand's ambition was to rival the great court collections of Europe. His models were the treasure houses and art chambers (*Kunstkammern*) of Dresden, Munich, Kassel, Ambras and Vienna. He was so successful that he left the British Museum a collection which could have come straight from the treasure house of a German-speaking prince of the Renaissance.

14 Opal glass beaker

Opal glass
Buquoy glasshouse, Gratzen (Nové Hrady)
Czech Republic, about 1680

The beaker is moulded with sea gods at play. Traces of arsenic in the glass make it appear to change colour like a precious opal. Glassmaking was allied to alchemy at baroque courts. This glass was made on the estate of Count Buquoy in Bohemia and was perhaps designed to be set into silver-gilt mounts for use as a welcome cup (*Wilkomm*).

WB.56

Nature and art

Renaissance artists and collectors admired the natural beauty of hardstones. Workshops in Milan and Prague specialised in polishing the stones on wheels. Hardstones were carved into cups and set in precious enamelled mounts. New creations (*artificialia*) were made out of the works of nature (naturalia). These were an important element in Renaissance and baroque collecting and later had a special appeal for Baron Ferdinand.

15 Jade cup

Jade, silver-gilt and enamelled mounts
Prague or Milan, 1600–1630,
handle and mounts later

WB.81

16 Shell-shaped agate cup

Agate, silver-gilt and enamelled mounts
Milan or Florence, 1550–1600, foot later

Acquired from the collection of Count Nostitz of Prague.

WB.83

17 The 'Cellini' Bell

Silver
Nuremberg, Germany, about 1550
Wenzel Jamnitzer

The insects, animals and plants on this bell were cast from life. The British collector Horace Walpole described it as 'the *uniquest* thing in the world'. It linked Baron Ferdinand to a European tradition of curiosity and collecting. Until Baron Ferdinand correctly identified the maker, it was attributed to the Italian Renaissance goldsmith, Benvenuto Cellini.

WB.95

18 Cup with shell cameos

Silver-gilt, carved shell
Nuremberg, Germany (?) 1525–50, altered mid 1890–98 with five new cameos

Seventeen medieval cameos, with religious subjects, can be seen on this cup. Five modern ones, made in Munich, were added when the cup was skilfully altered to make an attractive piece for the art market.

WB.118

19 Cockerel cups

Silver-gilt
1825–98
19a marked: Dordrecht 1636 or 1659, Huybert van de Berch (?)
19b faked marks for Nuremberg
Wolff Straub

Silver animal cups were criticised in a sermon of 1589: 'We drink from apes and priests, from monks and nuns, from lions and bears, from ostriches and cats, and from the Devil himself.' These cups are forgeries of the 19th century.

WB.142 and WB.141

20 Agate cup and cover

Agate, silver-gilt mounts
Bowl: about 1480, altered 1800–1898

The bowl was shaped and polished on the wheel to emphasise the veins in the pinkish agate.

WB.119

21 Agate bowl

Agate, silver-gilt enamelled mounts
Miseroni workshops, Milan or Prague about 1600

Relief-carved on the outside.

WB.84

22 Hunting calendar

Gilt brass
Germany, about 1600–1620

Engraved with the names and figures of different game animals and hunting dogs.

WB.228

23 Vase

Silver-gilt, painted enamels
Saxony, Germany, 1670
Samuel Klemm

Made to commemorate the Siege of Freiberg, Saxony in 1643.

WB.126

24 Stacking cups (*Satzbecher*)

Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, Germany, 1575–1600
Marked: Casper (24a) or Hans (24b) Beutmüller

WB.145 and WB.146

25 The Guild of Smiths' cup

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, 1690
Mark: Marx Weinold

Made for the Guild of Smiths; on the stem are smiths at work.

WB.127

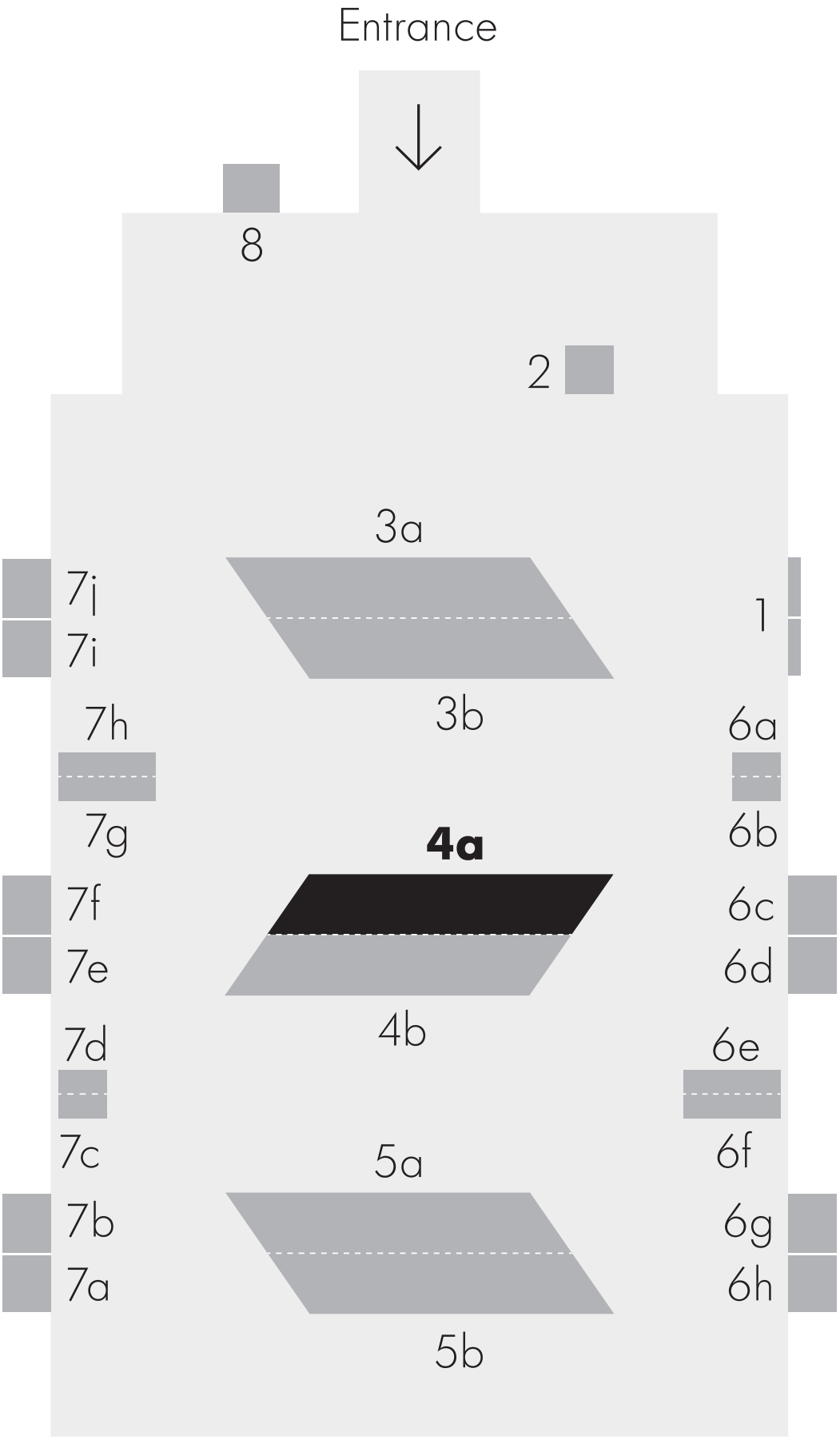
26 Nautilus cup

Shell (*Nautilus pompilius*),
silver-gilt mount
N. European, about 1550

Made from a nautilus shell from the Indo West Pacific. The empty shells were mysterious sea treasures which captured the imagination of Renaissance artists. The carvings of fighting dragons were possibly added in Guangzhou, China. The European goldsmith added silver mounts in the form of a sea dragon with gaping jaws, fierce teeth and a claw foot.

WB.114

Section 4a


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

The Devonshire hardstones

Baron Ferdinand acquired five carved hardstone vessels with gold mounts from the 8th Duke of Devonshire in 1897. The Duke had inherited them, and when lent to a London exhibition, they were described as 'Italian work of the 16th century, of the very finest character... and as a series probably unequalled'. We now think that they were made in a London workshop using old and new elements, between 1811 and 1834, when demand for these collectors' pieces was at its height.

1 Heliotrope ewer
Body: Italy, 1530–70,
mounts: 1811–34

WB.69

2 Jasper vase
Vase and cover: German (?) about 1600,
mounts: 1811–34

WB.71

3 Lapis lazuli vase
Vase and cover: Milan or Florence,
late 1550–1600, mounts: 1811–34

WB.70

4 Agate cup
Bowl: N. Italian or French (?) about 1600,
foot, stem and mounts: 1811–34

WB.72

5 Jasper ewer
Body: N. Italian, 1530–70, neck,
foot and mounts: 1811–34

WB.73

6 The ‘Cellini’ vase

Agate, enamelled gold
Agate: uncertain, mounts:
London 1811–34

The agate is carved in a late Roman style, of around AD 400, but is probably 19th century. The mounts, in the style of the Italian Renaissance goldsmith, Benvenuto Cellini, were made in London before 1834. Acquired as a genuine Renaissance treasure by Baron Ferdinand in 1897, the vase was a centrepiece of his displays in the New Smoking Room at Waddesdon.

WB.68

7 Plate with story of Samson

Silver-gilt
Paris (?) 1850–72

WB.99

8 Heliotrope cup

Body, French (?) 1600–1630;
stem, foot and mounts 1811–34

WB.82

9 Boar cup

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, about 1620,
shield replaced before 1866
Mark: Johannes Lencker

Animal sculpture in silver was a fashionable choice for drinking cups around 1600 and was later collected by the Rothschilds. The head comes off to serve as a cup for alcohol poured from the hollow body. Used to toast guests, the cup celebrates the savagery of the wild boar as an animal of the hunt. It used to smell strongly of cherry brandy.

WB.135

10 Stag cup

Silver-gilt
Vienna, late 1550–1600
Mark: unidentified maker

WB.138

11 Bear cup

Silver-gilt
1800–1898
Faked marks: Augsburg,
Marx Weinold

WB.139

12 Unicorn cup

Silver-gilt
Head and base: Nuremberg,
1579–1605, body and shields: later
Mark: Heinrich Jonas

WB.140

Forgeries by Reinhold Vasters

These elaborate cups are the work of the notorious forger, the Aachen goldsmith, Reinhold Vasters (1827–1909). As his workshop designs survive, objects can be attributed to him. Baron Ferdinand's father, Baron Anselm, acquired four of his cups between 1866 and 1872, the dates of the two editions of his collection catalogue. Vasters' lucrative career as a faker is linked with those of the Parisian dealer Frédéric Spitzer (1815–1890) and the goldsmith Alfred André (1839–1919).

13 Heliotrope cup

Figure and base: Germany, about 1630,
mounts: Aachen, 1866–72
Workshop of Reinhold Vasters

WB.120

14 Neptune quartz cup

Aachen, 1866–72
Made in the workshop of Reinhold
Vasters, with false marks

WB.122

15 Saxon miner cup

Silver-gilt, chalcedony cup
Aachen, 1866–72
Workshop of Reinhold Vasters

WB.121

16 Ewer and basin

Silver
Antwerp (?) basin dated 1558, central boss added later, ewer dated 1559
Mark: 'R. D.' or 'P. D.' (unknown maker), 'H. R.' in monogram (owner?)

The centre of the basin is worked in relief (embossed) with the story of the Judgement of Paris. The border shows the triumph of the sea god Neptune, with sea monsters and mermaids in the waves. The ewer shows the Abduction of Helen, based on a print after a Raphael painting.

WB.93 and WB.94

17 The Turkish siege beaker

Silver-gilt
German (?) 1530–40
Marked: Nuremberg, before 1541

The outer layer of this double-walled beaker is worked in high relief. It shows a perspective view of Turkish forces laying siege to a European fortified city, as happened with Vienna in 1529 and Güns (Köszeg, Hungary) in 1532. In the foreground horsemen are seen from behind as they look into the scene, creating a sense of depth.

WB.96

18 The Susanna tankard

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, 1628–78
Mark: David Schwestermuller I

The tankard is set with exquisite silver reliefs from about 1600 which tell the Biblical story of Susanna. The scenes show how Susanna was spied upon while bathing, and then falsely accused of adultery by the Elders. She was rescued by the young prophet Daniel and the Elders were condemned to death.

WB.129

19 Pair of candlesticks

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, France, about 1560
Jean de Court/Jean Court (?)

The bosses on the feet are painted with the Labours of Hercules, gods and goddesses, horsemen and musicians. The richness of the decoration, with coloured metal foils and gilding, gives a jewelled effect, making these attractive collectors' pieces.

WB.32.a and WB.32.b

20 Casket, Abraham and Isaac

Painted enamel on copper, copper-gilt mounts
Limoges, 1575–1600
Enameller: Susanne Court

The enamelled panels tell the story of Abraham and Isaac from the Book of Genesis in the Bible. On the lid Isaac meets Rebekah at the well. The female enameller Susanne Court has signed the lid. The casket has visible patch repairs which can be attributed to the Parisian restorer, Alfred André.

WB.51

21 Morion (helmet)

Embossed iron with gold inlay
Milan, about 1550–60
Workshop of Lucio Picinino (?)

The helmet was intended for ceremonial wear and for display as a work of art, rather than for use in battle. It depicts scenes from ancient Rome with monstrous animals, combats and military trophies.

WB.6

A rare set of Renaissance wine cups

The cups are of a classical shape that was fashionable first in Italy, and then north of the Alps from around 1530. This set was made by two makers, Paul Hübner, of Augsburg (a–h), and Raimund Laminit (i–l), between 1590 and 1600. Eight show women, each emblematic of one of the eight Christian Virtues. The other four represent the Elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Air. The scenes are based on engravings and are virtuoso examples of goldsmiths' work.

22 Twelve cups, the Virtues and the Elements

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, about 1590–1600
Paul Hübner, of Augsburg (a–h)
and Raimund Laminit (i–l)

a Charity
b Faith
c Hope
d Justice
e Prudence
f Fortitude
g Temperance
h Patience
i Air
j Earth
k Water
l Fire

WB.97.a to WB.97.l

23 Gustavus Adolphus Cup

Silver-gilt
Frankfurt-am-Main, 1632–4
Paul Birckenholtz

Made to commemorate Gustavus Adolphus, who was King of Sweden between 1611–32. As a military leader in the Thirty Years' War he made his country into a major European power. The 'Lion of the North' was killed at the battle of Lützen in 1632. An inscription inside the cover celebrates 'the most conquering of Heroes' and his bust appears on the lid.

WB.107

24 Nautilus cup

Shell: *Nautilus pompilius*,
Mounts: silver-gilt
Utrecht, 1594
Mark: unidentified maker

WB.115

25 Nautilus cup

Shell: *Nautilus pompilius*,
Mounts: silver-gilt
Dutch, 1600–1650,
later alterations to stem and foot
Three unidentified marks

WB.116

26 Back of a dish

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1560–80
Signed: 'I. C.' (Jean de Court/
Jean Court or workshop?)

Monsters and figures radiate from the centre. The design is from a series of playful classical designs for bowls made by Étienne Delaune before 1573. Limoges enamellers decorated both fronts and backs of their dishes with great ingenuity. The front, showing the destruction of Pharaoh's Host, is badly damaged.

WB.33

The Aspremont Lynden ewer and basin

In its centre the basin bears the arms of the Counts of Aspremont Lynden, of Liège and Brussels. The ewer and basin were used for hand washing during and after dining and are mentioned in a family marriage contract of 1610. They were fashion pieces based on designs by artists such as Cornelis Bos of Antwerp, and had status beyond their financial value. They are rare survivals of luxury Renaissance silver and were bought by Baron Ferdinand from the family in 1888.

27 Ewer

Silver-gilt
Antwerp, about 1545–50
Unidentified maker's mark

The surface is punched, stippled, embossed or engraved to catch the light.

WB.89

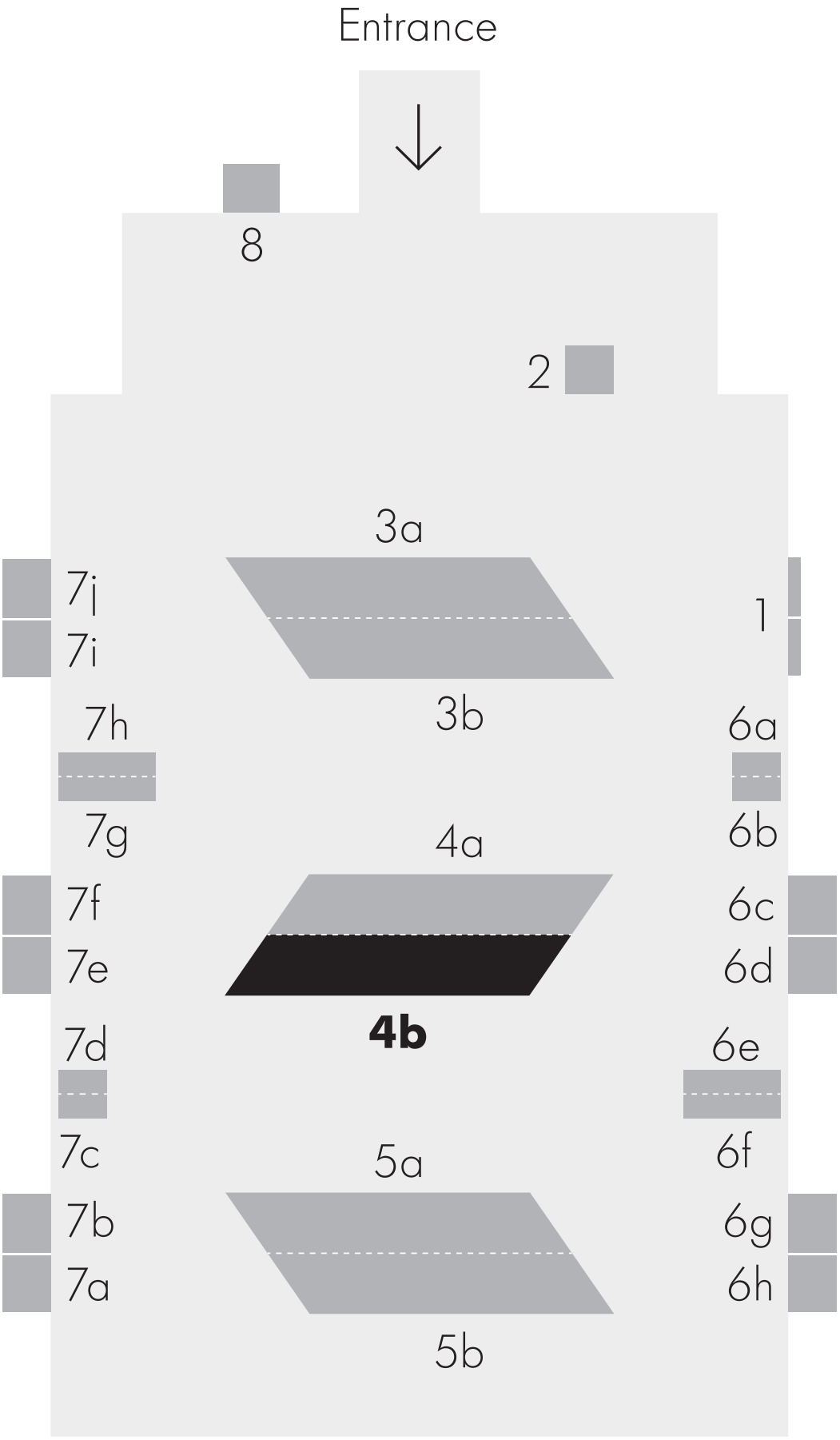
28 Basin

Silver-gilt
Antwerp, 1546–7
Mark: 'W' with crescent

Six panels on the rim represent the Five Plagues of Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh's Host.

WB.90

Section 4b


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Turquoise glass goblet

Opaque blue soda glass
Venice (Murano) 1475–1500

The goblet is enamelled and gilded with pairs of lovers, suggesting that it may have been a betrothal gift. The blue glass imitates the semi-precious stone turquoise. Turquoise glass was an extremely rare luxury product developed by Venetian glass makers in the 1490s. Up to a dozen skilled specialists worked together to make this goblet.

WB.55

2 Plaque, Minerva

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1560–70
Pierre Courtoys (?)

Minerva is the classical goddess of Wisdom.

WB.35

3 Plate

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1580
Signed: 'I. C.' see 4

Joseph's brothers find money in their sacks.
From a set with the biblical story of Joseph.

WB.34

4 Aeneas leaving Carthage

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, France, about 1530

Queen Dido weeps as her lover, Aeneas, leaves Carthage. From a set of about 74 plaques telling the story of Virgil's Aeneid. The scenes copy woodcuts from Johann Grüninger's edition of Virgil (Strasbourg, 1502). The maker is unidentified. The set probably decorated the panelling of a French Renaissance château.

WB.20

5 Plaque, Venus and Cupid

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1600
Signed: 'I. D. C.'

After a print by Étienne Delaune.

WB.37

6 Plaque, Minerva

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1560–80
Signed: 'I. C.'

'I. C.' may be the maker Jean de Court, or Jean Court, or the Court family workshop.

WB.38

7 Judith with the head of Holofernes

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, France, 1600–1630
Signed 'I. L.' Joseph Limosin

Judith freed the Jewish people from the tyrant Holofernes.

WB.42

8 Esther's feast

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, France, 1600–1630
Signed 'I. L.' Joseph Limosin

The book of Esther in the Bible tells how she delivered the Jewish people from the evil Haman.

WB.41

9 Salt cellar

Painted enamel on copper
1600–1630
Signed 'I. L.' Joseph Limosin (?)

Hexagonal, with classical gods on each panel. Salt was a precious commodity.

WB.43

10 Mucius Scaevola

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1580
Jean de Court (?) see 6

A Roman model of courage in his contempt for pain.

WB.45

11 Three mirror backs

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1600
Jean II Pénicaud

11a shows Meleager and Atlanta with the head of the Calydonian boar, and has a modern frame, probably made for Frédéric Spitzer. 11b shows Dido appealing to Diana. 11c shows a tree watered by cupids inscribed in French 'love will die if it isn't watered'. Both 11b and 11c are signed 'S. C.' for the female enameller Susanne Court, and come from the collections of the Dukes of Marlborough.

WB.40, WB.46 and WB.47

12 Subjects from the *Aeneid*

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1540–50
Jean II Pénicaud

Neptune calms the winds. After a lost painting by Raphael which was copied in a famous print by Marcantonio Raimondi. The border scenes also copy the print. The panels with inscriptions and the frame are later additions, possibly put together by the dealer Frédéric Spitzer. Five panels are stamped on the reverse with a Pénicaud workshop stamp.

WB.21

13 Spoons

Horn handles, painted enamel on copper bowls
Limoges, about 1625
Joseph Limosin (?)

The bowls show Apollo and a Muse playing a lute.

WB.44

14 Cup (*Scheuer*)

Enamelled and gilded glass
German or Bohemian, 1850–75

A forgery with the arms of Scharff of Nuremberg and Hörlin of Augsberg and the date 1518.

WB.59

15 Spoons

15a silver, glass, 15b silver-gilt
15a Belgian (?) 1850–98
15b mark: Malmö (then Danish, now Sweden) 1450–1500

15a is a forged incense spoon. 15b has St George and the Dragon on the handle.

WB.209 and WB.210

A model for collecting

The Rothschilds were among the greatest collectors of the 19th century. They valued virtuosity and demonstrated discernment and a sense of history in selecting their treasures. Baron Ferdinand's ambition was to rival the great court collections of Europe. His models were the treasure houses and art chambers (*Kunstkammern*) of Dresden, Munich, Kassel, Ambras and Vienna. He was so successful that he left the British Museum a collection which could have come straight from the treasure house of a German-speaking prince of the Renaissance.

16 Cup, Vulcan's Forge

Silver-gilt
Augsburg, 1566–1611
Mark: Salomon II Spitzmacher

The god Vulcan forges wings for Cupid as Venus and Cupid watch. The scene is exquisitely detailed. It copies a relief of around 1570, attributed to Hans Jamnitzer, a goldsmith of Nuremberg. Baron Ferdinand bought this cup on the Island of Patmos while on a cruise on his yacht, the *Rona*, in January 1898.

WB.98

17 Morion (helmet)

Embossed iron with gold inlay
Milan, about 1550–60
Workshop of Lucio Picinino (?)

The helmet was intended for ceremonial wear and for display as a work of art, rather than for use in battle. It depicts scenes from ancient Rome, with monstrous animals, combats and military trophies.

WB.6

Painted enamels

The Waddesdon Bequest includes masterpieces of French Renaissance enamelling. From about 1500, artisans in Limoges transformed the traditional craft of enamelling on copper. Instead of gouging out channels for the enamels, they treated the copper surface as a flat canvas for painting. Brilliant colours were applied in layers with successive firings to fuse the enamels. Alternatively, manipulating layers of white over a dark ground (*grisaille*) imitated the effects of tone and modelling in contemporary prints.

18 Casket, Abraham and Isaac

Painted enamel on copper, copper-gilt mounts
Limoges, 1540–60
Enameller: Susanne Court (signed on the lid)

The enamelled panels tell the story of Abraham and Isaac from the Book of Genesis in the Bible. On the lid Isaac meets Rebekah at the well, with the signature of the female enameller Susanne Court. The casket has visible patch repairs which can be attributed to the Parisian restorer, Alfred André.

WB.51

19 Ewer

Painted enamel on copper, copper-gilt mounts
Limoges, France, about 1600
Susanne Court, signed inside the lip

The ewer has two zones of decoration. The lower zone shows the biblical story of Moses. Here he is rejoicing with the Israelites, following their safe passage through the Red Sea while the Egyptian Pharaoh drowns. Above, children play musical instruments. The ewer is signed inside the spout and under the foot by the female enameller Susanne Court.

WB.52

20 Pair of candlesticks

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, France, about 1560
Jean de Court/Jean Court (?)

The bosses on the feet are painted with the Labours of Hercules, gods and goddesses, horsemen and musicians. The richness of the decoration, with coloured metal foils and gilding, gives a jewelled effect, making these attractive collectors' pieces.

WB.32a and WB.32b

21 Back of a dish

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1580
Front signed 'M. C.' for Martial Courtois

Jupiter and his eagle at the centre. On either side are caricatures of monks with asses' ears. The front of the dish is damaged.

WB.30

22 The Woman of the Apocalypse

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1570
Reverse signed 'Courtois' for Martial Courtois

A vision of the future, from the Book of Revelation in the Bible. The evil prostitute of Babylon sits drunkenly on a horned beast with seven heads. She offers a cup towards kneeling men, who represent the rulers of the world, including a king, a pope and a cardinal. The blue tunic of the man in the foreground is a clever repair by the Parisian restorer Alfred André.

WB.31

23 Two pilgrim flasks

Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica)
Urbino about 1560–1600

These are designed for display. The painted decoration is based on the *Petites Grotesques* engraved by Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau, which evoke the style of ancient Roman wall paintings. Baron Ferdinand displayed 23a and 23b on a door lintel in the New Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor.

WB.63.a and WB.63.b

24 The Goddess Fortune

Enamelled terracotta
Florence, about 1500–1510
Giovanni Della Robbia

Fortune stands on a dolphin, holding a sail while her hair streams in the wind. Her graceful pose evokes Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. This impressive figure is perhaps from a fountain in a Florentine Renaissance palace. She represents the height of technological achievement of her time, as a sculpture in ceramic.

WB.65

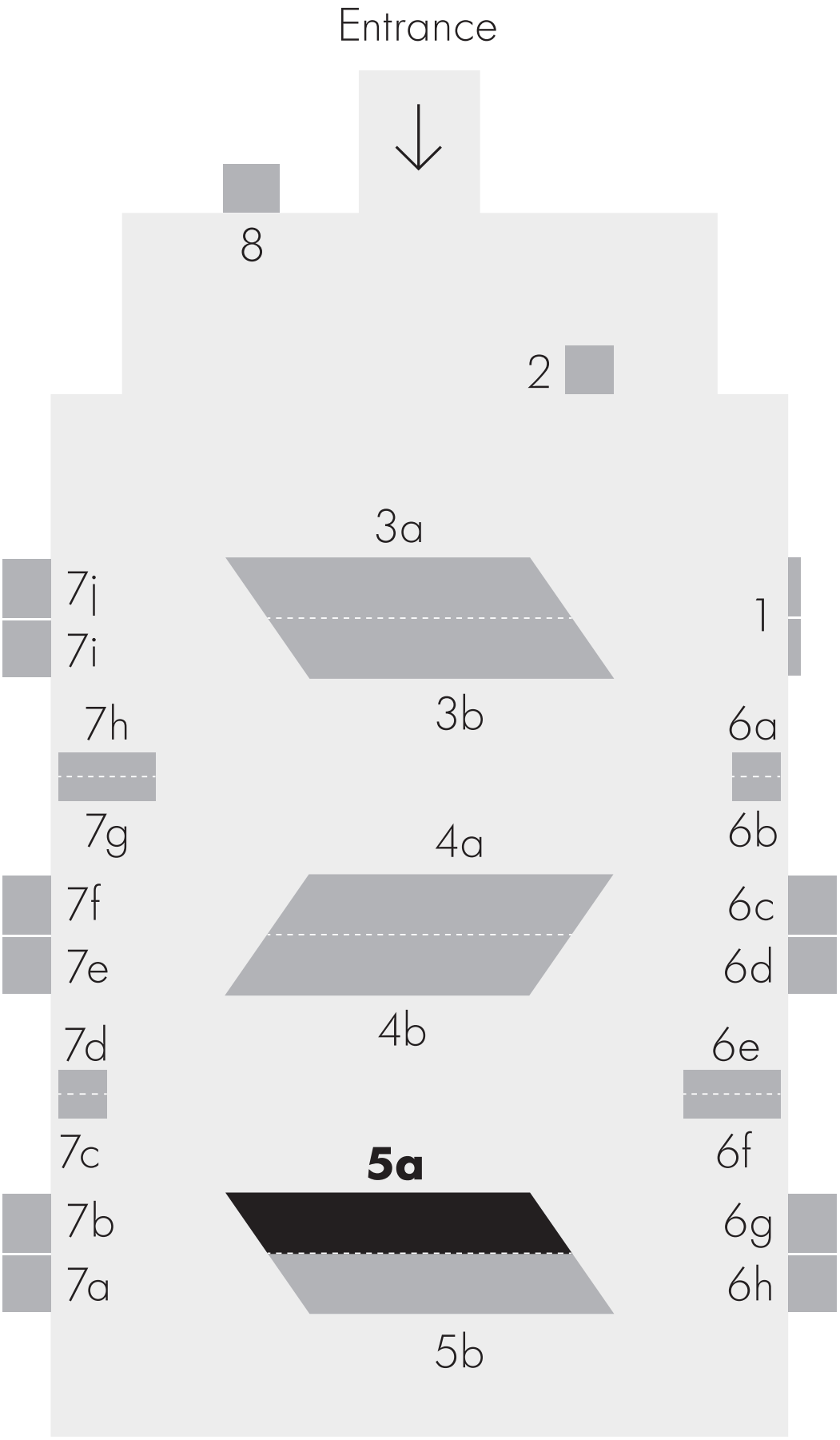
25 Apollo and the Muses

Painted enamel on copper
Limoges, about 1600
Signed by Susanne Court

The design copies a print by Giorgio Ghisi of Mantua, maker of the Ghisi Shield in the Waddesdon Bequest. The Muses play musical instruments by a stream, accompanied by poets, cupids, Apollo and Pegasus. The pale flesh tints, rich turquoises and purples are typical of Susanne Court's work.

WB.48

Section 5a


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 St Catherine

Wood. Hand and base , later additions
Netherlands, about 1500–1525
Workshop of Jan van Steffeswert

The Holy Virgin St Catherine is shown as a young woman with long flowing hair. She tramples the figure of her persecutor, the Roman Emperor Maximian. Van Steffeswert is the best-documented late Gothic sculptor of the Netherlands. We know about his family in Maastricht, his commissions and lawsuits, and his religious beliefs as he lived through the Reformation.

WB.260

2 St George and the Dragon

Painted and gilded wood
South German, 1450–1500

Warrior saints were often placed on either side of altar pieces as 'shrine guardians' in late medieval churches in southern Germany. Baron Ferdinand acquired this statue from the sale of the dealer Frédéric Spitzer in 1893. The painted surface, the spear and the left hand were probably restored by Spitzer in answer to demand for this kind of sculpture.

WB.259

3 Iron coffer

Iron, hammered and chiselled
Spanish, 1400–1500

This ornate strongbox is decorated in relief with gothic arches and architectural tracery. Chests of this sort conveyed the sense of a treasury in collectors' interiors in the 19th century. This coffer had a prominent place in the New Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor, where it was placed on a special stand.

WB.18

4 Pilgrim flask

Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica)
Urbino, 1599–1600
Workshop of Francesco Patanazzi

The flask is part of a large ceramic service, each piece of which is painted with the arms of Fernando Ruiz de Castro, 6th Count of Lemos, and of his wife. In 1599 they arrived in Naples, which was then a Spanish dominion, as the new Viceroys. Perhaps the set was a diplomatic gift from the Dukes of Urbino to welcome the couple.

WB.64.b

5 Pilgrim flask

Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica)
Urbino, about 1585–1600
Patanazzi family workshop

Part of a very ambitious and elaborate set of ceramic dining wares. Each piece in the set has the device and motto of Alfonso II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. The device shows a piece of asbestos in flames, with the motto 'it burns forever', as an emblem of undying love. The roundel shows a man warming his feet in front of the fire, evoking Winter.

WB.64.a

6 Wine cooler

Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica)
Urbino, about 1580–1610
Patanazzi family workshop (?)

The inside shows Moses striking water from the rock, from the biblical Book of Exodus.

WB.60

7 Vase

Tin-glazed earthenware (maiolica)
Urbino, about 1580–90
Patanazzi family workshop

A grand display piece with scenes of the life of Julius Caesar.

WB.62

A family collection

Collecting was a family activity for the Rothschild banking dynasty. The Waddesdon Bequest is the creation of a father and son: Baron Anselm (1803–1874) of Frankfurt and Vienna, and Baron Ferdinand (1839–1898), who became a British citizen in 1860. The collection was formed on the fast-growing art markets of Frankfurt, Vienna, London and Paris. As a treasury of intricate, precious objects it was modelled on the art collections formed by princes and nobles in the courts of Renaissance Europe. It shows the rise of the Rothschilds as a new European aristocracy.

8 Anne d'Este

Painted and enamelled on copper
Limoges, 1563–66, later frame
Signed: Léonard Limosin

Anne (1531–1607) was powerful in the Catholic League, in the French Wars of Religion. She helped to build acceptance for Henri IV as king of France, following his conversion to Catholicism in 1589. The panel is signed on the right sleeve. For later collectors, like the Rothschilds, Limosin's portraits evoked the drama, intrigue and romance of the French Renaissance court.

WB.24

9 Two plates

Painted and enamelled on copper
Limoges, about 1600
Signed: 'S. C.' for Susanne Court

From the same set of dining wares showing Esau selling his birthright (9a) and the burial of Abraham (9b) from the biblical Book of Genesis. These scenes are after designs by Étienne Delaune and are signed by the female enameller, Susanne Court. Her work is well-represented in the Waddesdon Bequest.

WB.49 and WB.50

10 Casket, the story of Tobit

Painted and enamelled on copper,
copper gilt mounts
Limoges, about 1540–60
Workshop of Jean Pénicaud II

The biblical book of Tobit tells the story of an Israelite living as an exile in Nineveh under Assyrian rule. He remained faithful to Judaism. Scenes from his life on the panels are accompanied by French inscriptions. The enameller is unknown, but the casket is painted in layers of white on a dark ground (*grisaille*) with great subtlety and fluency.

WB.22

11 Portrait of an unknown man

Painted and enamelled on copper
Limoges, dated 1550 (?)
Signed 'L. L.' for Léonard Limosin (?)

The identity of the sitter and the origin of the piece are uncertain.

WB.25

12 Wine cup, Jacob's Ladder

Painted and enamelled on copper
Limoges, about 1560
Signed 'I. C.' for Jean de Court/Jean Court (?)

Jacob's vision of Heaven, from the biblical Book of Genesis.

WB.36

13 Salt cellar

Silver-gilt
Lucerne, Switzerland, 1800–1898
Bossard workshop (?)

WB.144

14 Book clasps

Silver-gilt, red silk
Flemish, 1400–1500

WB.225.a-b

15 Four panels from caskets

Painted and enamelled on copper
Limoges, about 1540
(15b and 15d) signed 'P. R.' for Pierre Reymond

Two pairs of enamelled panels to decorate wcaskets. The first two, on a black ground, show a boating party and the Abduction of Helen. The second pair, on a blue ground, show the Triumph of Caesar and the Judgement of Paris. Sets of panels would be mounted in metal to make jewellery caskets.

WB.26, WB.27, WB.29 and WB.28

Collecting cutlery

The Waddesdon Bequest includes wedding knives and forks, folding cutlery, and knives, forks and spoons with precious handles. Some pieces were made or altered for the art market in the 19th century, like 17, 18, 19, 24 and 26. One, 23 was made in Amsterdam for Maria Commelin and Baldwin de Bordes in celebration of their marriage on 2nd May 1608. Another, 27 has its original velvet sheath, and a Dutch inscription in praise of fidelity.

16 Agate and gold spoon
Dutch, late 1550–1600

WB.213

17 Agate and gold spoon
Reinhold Vasters, 1850–98

WB.211

18 Agate and gold spoon
French or German, 1850–98

WB.212

19 Folding spoon and fork
Silver-gilt, German, 1825–72

WB.214

20 Case and instruments
French, 1870–90

WB.216

21 Knife
Dutch, 1600–1700, modern blade

WB.205

22 Gold knife and fork
Dutch, 1600–1700

WB.203

23 Gold wedding knife
Dutch, about 1608

WB.201

24 Silver folding fork
German, 1825–75

WB.215

25 Gold fork with gems
German, 1600–1700

WB.207

26 Knife and fork
About 1600, modern blade

WB.206

27 Case with knife and fork
Dutch, about 1600

WB.202

28 Case of 12 knives
Gilt-tooled leather; ivory
French (?) 1600–1700

WB.208

29 Spring driven table clock

Brass, silver, niello; iron movement
Northern Italy (?) 1480–1500,
altered before 1866

Baron Anselm Rothschild acquired this clock before 1866, by which time it had been greatly altered. It is probably a very early domestic clock, made around 1490 in Northern Italy, but the alterations make it difficult to be certain. The case was modified in the 19th century to reflect the then popular Venetian style.

WB.222

30 Snuff-grater

Silver-gilt
German (Augsburg?) late 1650–1700

WB.227

31 Book covers

Silver-gilt
Venice, 1800–1830

WB.224

32 Buckle and belt-end

Gilt-brass
German, 1825–75

WB.226

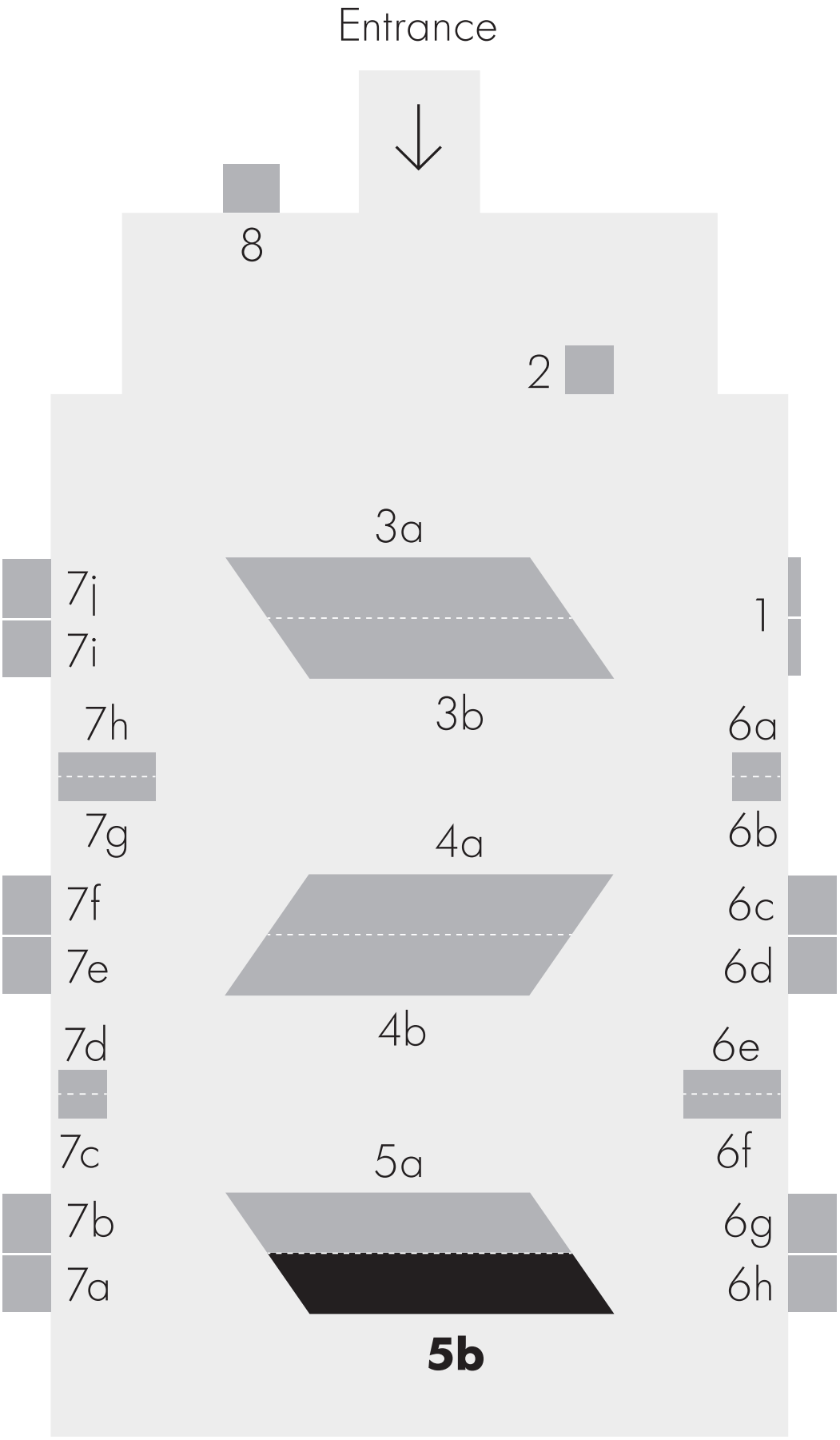
33 Sibyls casket

Painted enamel on copper
Paris, about 1535
Attributed to Pierre Mangot

The six Sibyls shown on the casket prophesied the coming of Christ. They are delicately painted in white enamel on a dark ground (*grisaille*), signed 'I. P.'. The skilful Limoges enameller is unknown but the silver-gilt mounts on the casket are attributed to Pierre Mangot, goldsmith to Francis I of France. Mangot specialised in exotic and unusual pieces for the French court.

WB.23

Section 5b


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Dionysos and Ariadne

Bronze
100 BC–1 BC

The beautifully modelled heads decorate handles, perhaps from a funerary chest. These are the only classical objects in the Bequest, acquired by Baron Ferdinand in the last year of his life. They are said to have been found in a tomb near Samsun, in modern Turkey.

WB.1.a and WB.1.b

2 Persephone and Pluto

Bronze
100 BC–1 BC

From the same tomb as 1a and 1b.

WB.2.a and WB.2.b

3 Silver filigree casket

Silver, diamond, emerald, pearl
French (?) 1825–75

WB.220

4 Casket

Iron damascened with gold and silver
French (?) 1525–75
Diego de Caias (?)

Decorated with delicate hunting scenes in a landscape. The casket was possibly made by the armourer Diego de Caias. In the 1540s he worked for Henry VIII in England. A hunting knife he made for the king is in the Royal Collection. It was referred to in Henry VIII's inventory as a woodknife 'of Dego his makinge'.

WB.17

5 Casket

Glass, metal foils, ebony frame
Panels: Swiss (?) 1600–1625, later mounts

WB.219

6 Ivory casket

Ivory, silver-gilt
French, about 1400

The vertical silver bands are engraved with messages of love and loyalty.

WB.217

7 Scent vase
Shell cameos, silver-gilt mounts
Cameos: Italian, 1500–1600, mounts 1825–75

WB.230

8 Gun-powder flask
Iron damascened with gold
Florence (?) 1525–75

WB.14

9 Oval panel
Damascened iron
Antwerp (?) about 1570

From a set of horse parade armour. Marcus Curtius is presented as a Roman model of courage.

WB.15

10 House altar
Pearwood panels, ebony and silver-gilt
German 1550–1600

The panels are carved with scenes from The Passion of Christ as a focus for private prayer.

WB.234

11 Writing casket

Ebony, silver-gilt fittings
Augsburg, 1590–1632
Mark: Mathäeus Wallbaum

The silver relief plaques show the planets, the signs of the Zodiac, the Seasons and the Elements. The figure of Prudence reclines on the lid.
The hunting scene shown in front of the casket is from inside its lid. A very similar silver casket by Wallbaum has been in the Munich *Schatzkammer* since 1635.

WB.218

Fuelling the art market

Swords and firearms combine engineering skill with virtuoso craftsmanship. They have always been popular with collectors. Most of the swords and guns in the Waddesdon Bequest were acquired by Baron Ferdinand in 1893 from the collection sale of the dealer, Frédéric Spitzer. Spitzer specialised in combining old and new elements, often known now as 'bitzers' as in 14–20 shown here.

The notorious dealer and forger Frédéric Spitzer, in Renaissance costume, photographed about 1880

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence

12 Dagger
1850–72 (possibly using elements from 1500–1600)

WB.13

13 Sword
Steel, silver and *niello*
Blade: Passau, Germany, about 1600, grip and pommel: 1850–93

Made up for Frédéric Spitzer with a new silver pommel and grip inlaid with niello.

WB.11

14 Sword
Iron damascened with gold
Blade: German late 1550–1600, Hilt: late 1850–93, blade mark: 'A. M.', Andreis Munsten (?)

A '*bitzer*': made up in the 1800s for the dealer Frédéric Spitzer.

WB.12

15 Wheel-lock rifle
Steel, walnut, white horn and bone
South German, about 1600, altered 1850–93
Mark: 'P. O.' for Peter Opel

WB.7

16 Match-lock gun

Steel, walnut, white horn and bone
German, about 1600, altered 1850–93

The stock and barrel were fitted together later, probably for Frédéric Spitzer.

WB.10

17 Wheel-lock gun

Steel, walnut, white horn and bone
German, about 1600, altered 1850–93

Altered for Frédéric Spitzer.

WB.9

18 Wheel-lock gun

Steel, walnut, white horn, bone, ivory
Munich, 1610–20, later additions
Stock: workshop of Hieronymous Borstorffer, barrel and lock: court workshop of Daniel Sadeler, Munich

Later altered for Frédéric Spitzer.

WB.8

A model for collecting

The Rothschilds were among the greatest collectors of the 19th century. They valued virtuosity and demonstrated discernment and a sense of history in selecting their treasures. Baron Ferdinand's ambition was to rival the great court collections of Europe. The models were the treasure houses and art chambers (*Kunstkammern*) of Dresden, Munich, Kassel, Ambras and Vienna. He was so successful that he left the British Museum a collection which could have come straight from the treasure house of a German-speaking prince of the Renaissance.

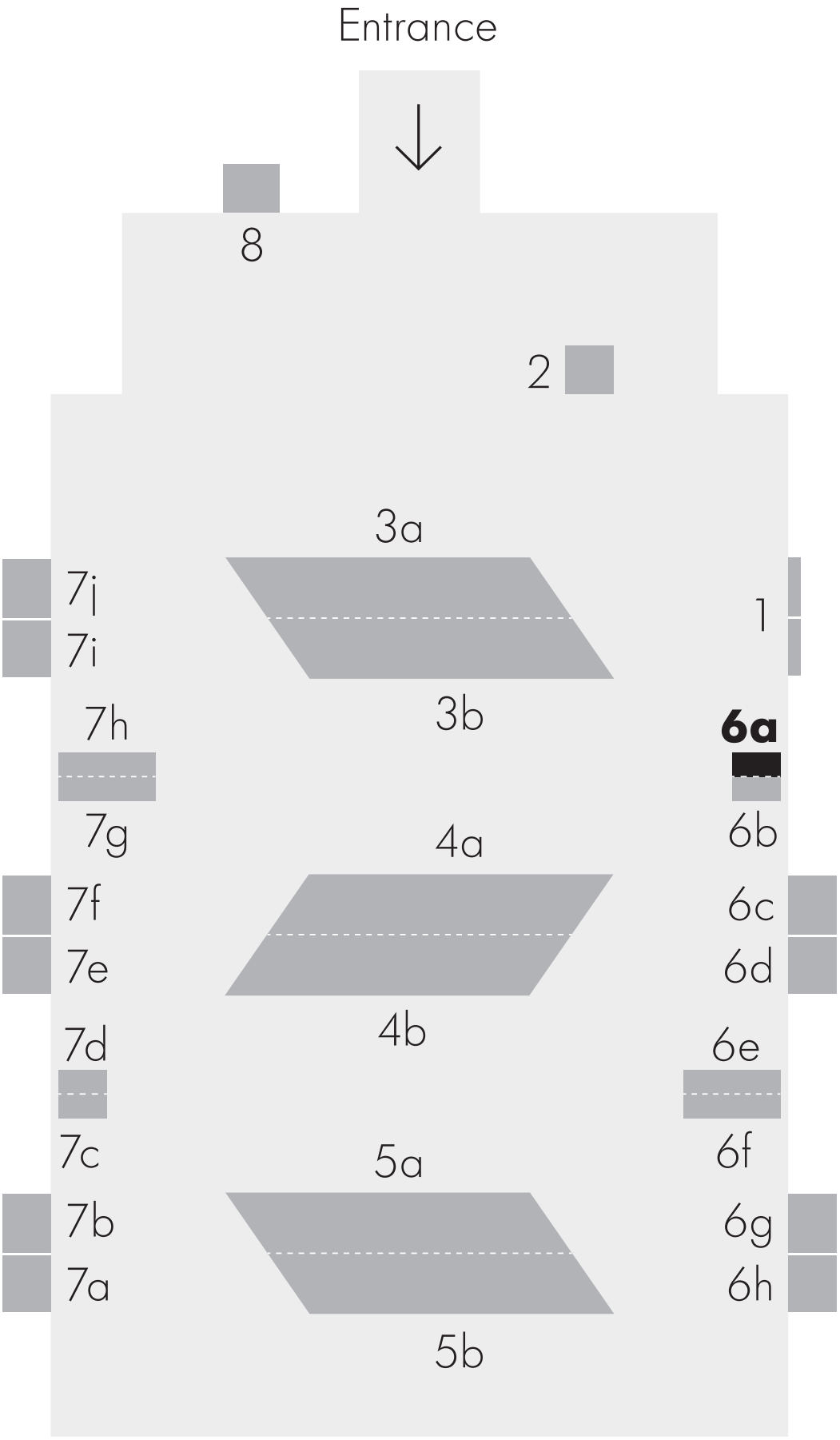
19 St Catherine

Wood. Hand and base, later additions
Netherlands, about 1500–1525
Workshop of Jan van Steffeswert

St Catherine is shown as a virginal woman with long flowing hair. She tramples the figure of her persecutor, the Roman Emperor Maximian. Van Steffeswert is well-documented in Maastricht. We know about his family, his commissions and lawsuits, and his religious beliefs as he lived through the Reformation.

WB.260

Section 6a


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Margaret of Austria and Philibert of Savoy

Boxwood
Mechelen, Belgium, about 1515–25
Conrad Meit of Worms

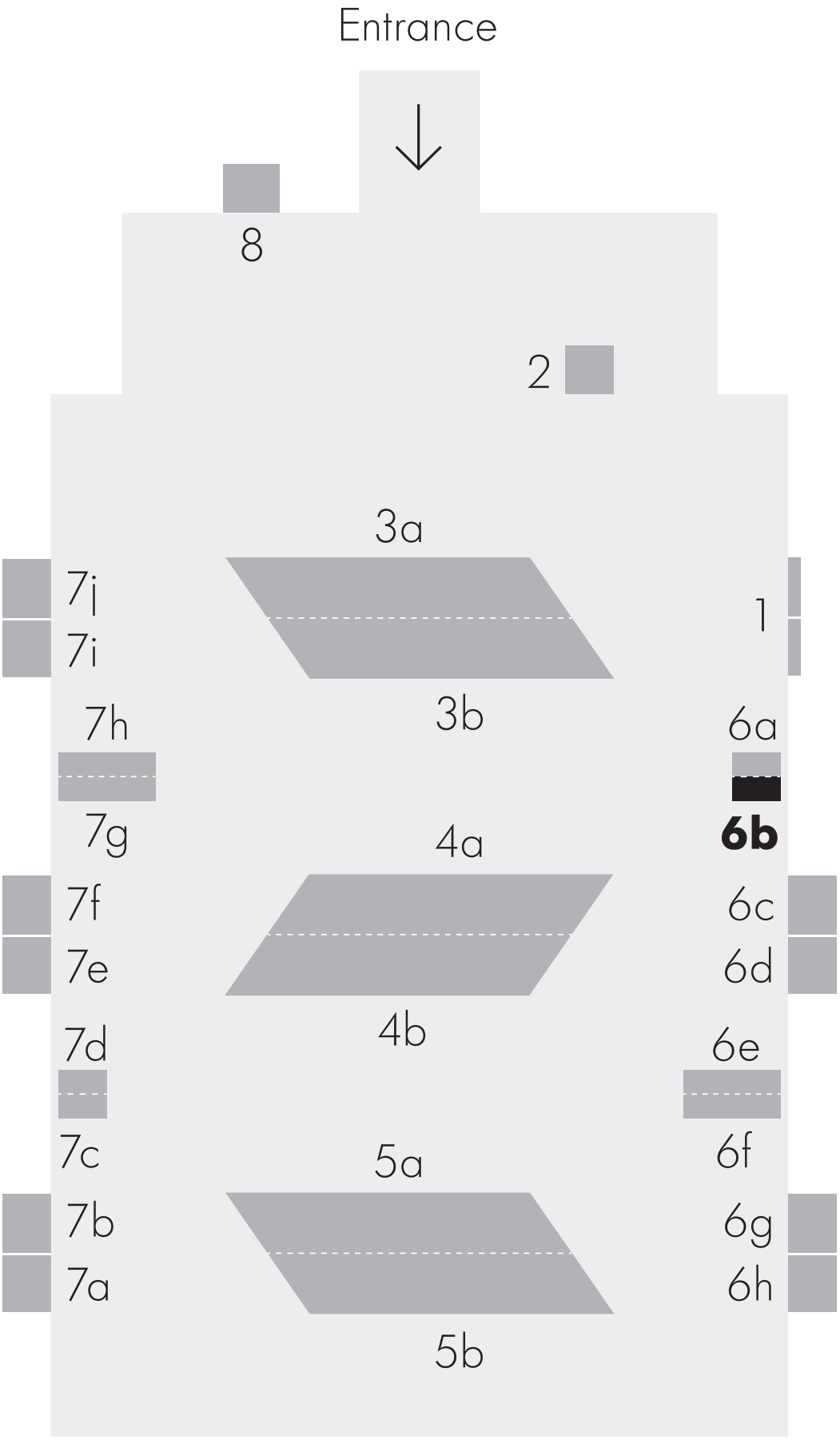
Margaret of Austria was Regent of the Netherlands between 1517 and 1530. Conrad Meit was her court sculptor. He shows her with her husband Philibert, Duke of Savoy, who had died in 1504. The busts were probably models for larger sculptures. In tribute to this wife, his hatbadge shows St Margaret, with his motto, *Je Ne Scai* ('I know not'). Margaret's court was an important artistic centre. Her collections demonstrated her keen aesthetic sense and her intellectual curiosity.

WB.261

Portrait of Margaret of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands (1480–1530) as a young girl, Jean Hey, oil on oak panel, about 1490

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence

Section 6b


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Collecting taste

Baron Ferdinand displayed these three objects together in the New Smoking Room. His arrangement was entirely aesthetic and allowed him to tell the objects' stories to his visitors. He inherited the busts and wrote how they had belonged to the great collector Rudolf II of Prague: 'an enthusiastic lover both of old and contemporary art... Part of this collection now enriches the Green Vaults at Dresden and two small boxwood busts... are in mine.' He acquired the Palmer Cup from the Palmer-Morewood family in Warwickshire. Their ancestor had supposedly won this talisman from the King of France in a game of cards.

Detail of a photograph of the New Smoking Room in 1897, showing Baron Ferdinand's arrangement on the middle shelf of the pieces shown here

© The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

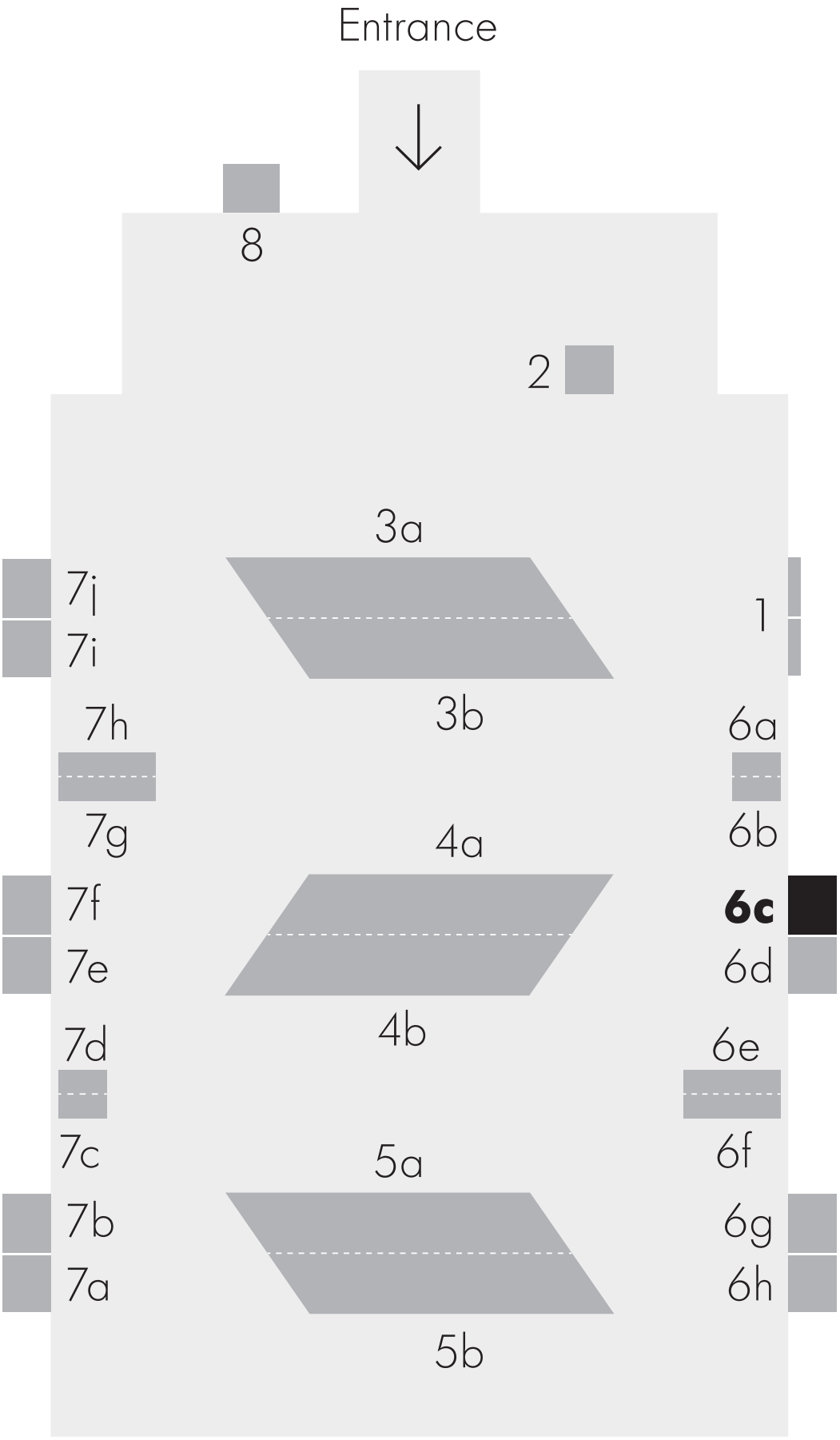
The Palmer Cup

Gilded and enamelled glass, silver-gilt foot
Glass: Syria or Egypt, mount: France Both about 1200–1250

The Middle Eastern beaker was transformed into a goblet in France. One line in the Arabic inscription above the figures is in praise of wine and can be traced to the poet Kushajim (died around AD 961). Middle Eastern decorated glass had high status in medieval Europe, and was coveted by rulers and nobles. Later it was treasured in European courtly collections (*Kunstkammern*).

WB.53

Section 6c


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Architectural pendants

From 1550, European fashion favoured heavy, sculptural pendants made in enamelled gold, set with large gems (8). They often had an architectural framework incorporating tiny enamelled figures; many of them have the look of a stage set. The fashion for architectural jewels was spread by printed designs throughout Europe. With the revival of interest in these jewels from 1800 demand outstripped supply. Goldsmiths put together jewels from old and new elements or made convincing fakes which are only now being identified.

1 **Venus between two dolphins**
Paris (?) 1840–98

WB.150

2 **Venus and Cupid**
Paris (?) 1800–1850

WB.147

3 **Cleopatra**
Paris (?) 1800–1850

WB.151

4 **The Adoration of the Magi**
German, about 1600 (?)

WB.148

5 **Three Cardinal Virtues**
Alfred André (1839–1919) (?) Paris

WB.149

6 **The Annunciation**
German (?) Netherlandish (?)
1550–75

WB.153

7 **Double cameo, woman's head**
Italian, 1400–1500

WB.186

8 Cameo of Minerva
1550–1600, frame: 1850–98

WB.187

9 Female bust
Burgundy (?) Flanders (?)
1450–1500

WB.192

10 Tooth- and ear-pick, case
Dutch (?) about 1600

WB.194

11 Ring
Hungarian (?) 1800–1898

WB.197

12 Ring with cameo of an African man
Italian, 1600–1700, altered 1800–1898

The onyx was cut around 1600 to 1700 with the head of a black African man in the dark layer of the stone. Jewels with busts of black Africans were popular from around 1600. The setting, with turbanned black Africans, is probably later.

WB.200

13 Signet ring

French or Netherlandish, 1525–75

The unidentified owner's initials 'H. E.' identify this as a personal seal, used to seal wax on letters. The owner's coat of arms is engraved in rock crystal over coloured foils which are now damaged.

WB.198

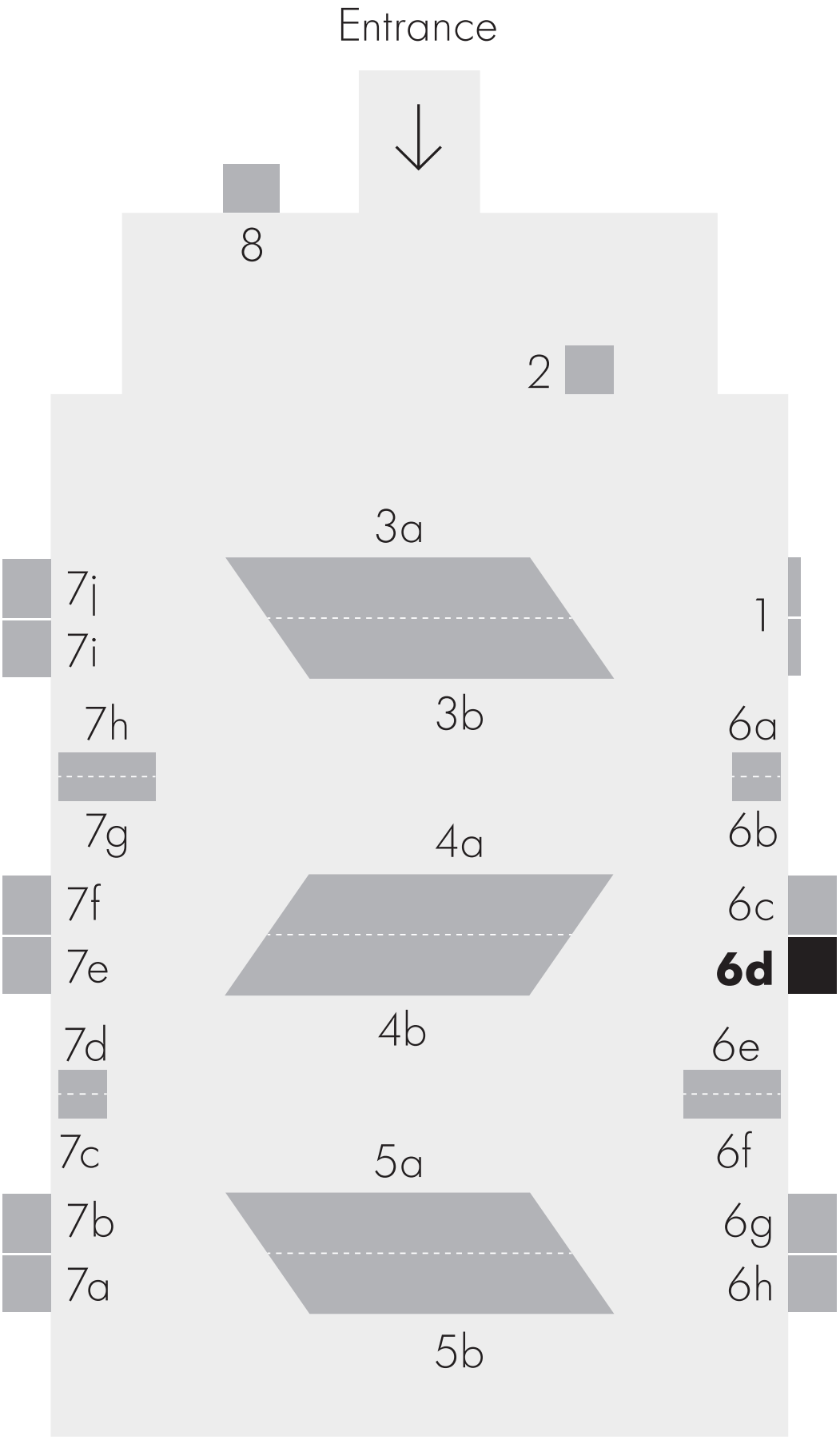
14 Ring

Flemish (?) 1525–75

In the form of a book, with a skull on the top cover. Inside is a small enamelled figure with a skull and hourglass and biblical inscriptions as a reminder of death (*memento mori*).

WB.199

Section 6d


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Sculptural pendants

From about 1550 goldsmiths experimented with making pendants with miniature sculptures. Made from enamelled and gem-set gold, often incorporating misshapen or ‘baroque’ pearls, they displayed virtuosity and inventiveness. In the 19th century demand for these jewels overtook supply and pieces were constructed for the art market, recycling old jewels or making modern copies.

1 Bead, Moses and the Tablets of the Law
French, 1500–1600, altered 1800–1898

WB.184

2 Pendant vase
French (?) 1800–1898

WB.181

3 Agate scent-bottle
Central European, 1600–1700, later additions

WB.185

4 Cupid on horseback
German, 1500–1600 (?)

WB.160

5 Horseman
German, 1525–75 (?)

WB.161

6 Hawk
Hungarian (?) 1800–1898

WB.163

7 Parrot
Spanish, 1500–1600, altered by Alfred André (1839–1919)

WB.165

8 **Ram amulet**
Spain or South America (?) 1500–1600

WB.166

9 **Virgin and Child**
Spanish, 1525–75

WB.191

10 **Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)**
Spanish, 1600–1650

WB.164

11 **A hind**
Spain (?) 1600–1650, altered Paris 1850–98

WB.162

12 **Sea-dragon**
Paris, 1800–1883 (?)

WB.159

A Renaissance fashion for men

Hat jewels were an elite male fashion of around 1490–1530. They were worn as luxury accessories, sewn onto the hat as badges of status. The passion for dressing up in Renaissance costume in the 19th century stimulated the faking and collecting of these pieces.

13 The Judgement of Paris

Enamelled gold, precious gems
Italian (?) French (?) 1520–75 (?)

Possibly an early 19th-century fake, made up as a brooch.

WB.152

14 The Conversion of Saul

Enamelled gold, precious gems
Italian (?) Southern German (?) about 1550

Tells the dramatic biblical story of the conversion of Saul into the apostle St Paul.

WB.171

15 Hat jewel

Enamelled gold, precious gems
German or Netherlandish, 1600–1650

A military trophy worn on the hat as seen in portraits of the early 1600s.

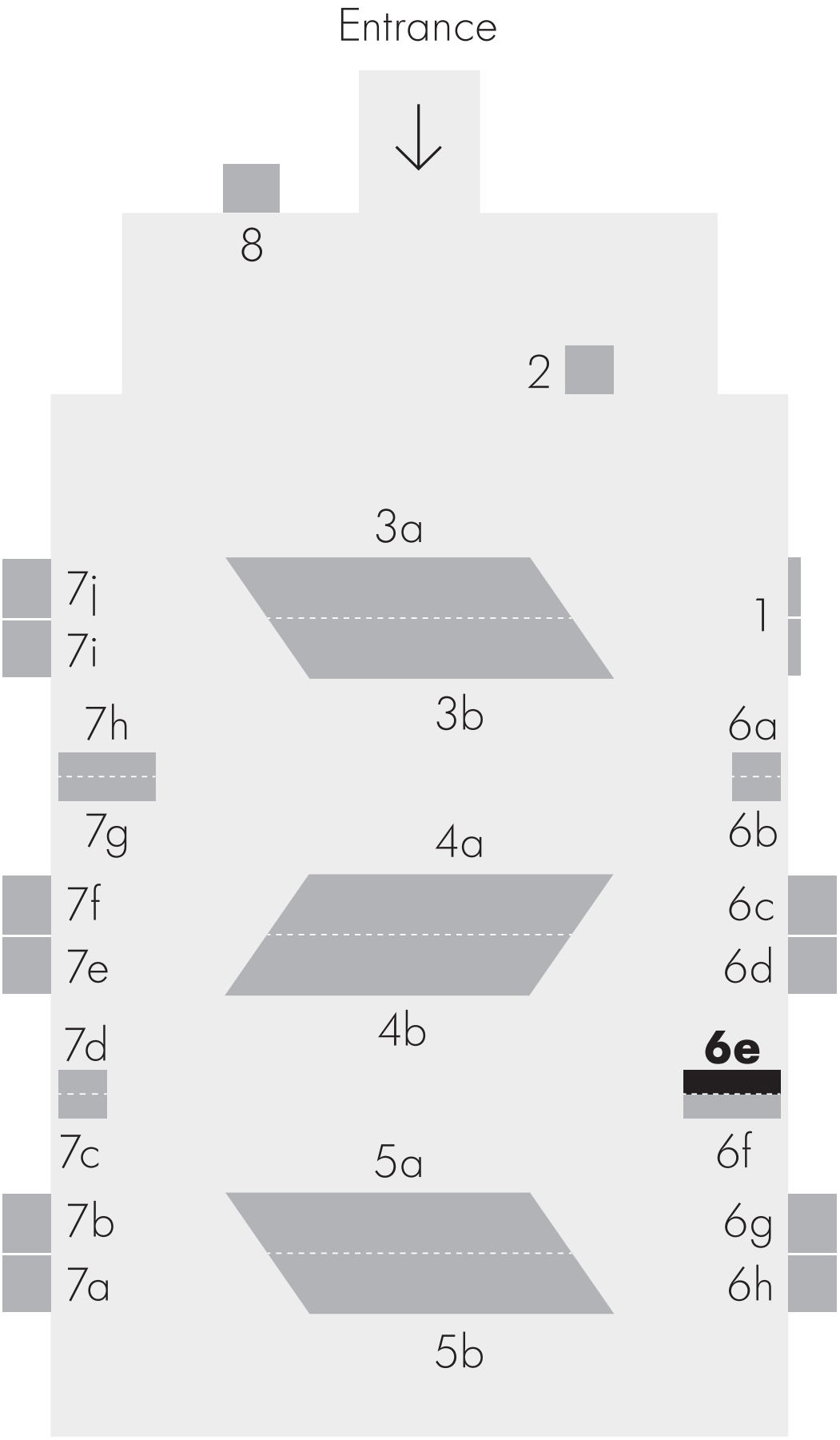
WB.193

16 St George and the Dragon

Enamelled gold, precious gems
French (?) Southern German (?)
1550–75 (?)

WB.172

Section 6e


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Rediscovering Renaissance jewellery

From around 1800 Europeans rediscovered Renaissance history and art including jewellery design. The number of genuine pieces was limited, and this stimulated the making of forgeries. Many fakes are of high quality. It can still be difficult to identify them despite scientific analysis, which can sometimes reveal modern materials and methods of manufacture. Knowledge of the art market and the history of collecting in the 19th century can also help to identify fakes and patterns of demand among collectors such as the Rothschilds.

1 Pendant

Enamelled gold, rock crystal
Mexican or Spanish, 1550–1600

Shaped like a lantern, with miniature devotional carvings in wood inside a rock crystal case. On one side, the Crucifixion, on the other, Christ displays his wounds. The pendant belongs to a group, some of them including hummingbird feathers, which can be attributed to Mexico from 1550–1600.

WB.183

2 Pendant

Enamelled gold, rock crystal
Mexico (?) dated 1591

This lantern-shaped pendant would originally have enclosed a miniature devotional sculpture like 1.

WB.182

3 Mirror case

Enamelled gem-set gold, pearl
Paris, Alfred André (1839–1919) before 1898

A plaster mould for the cover survives from the André workshop in Paris, proving that the jewel was made there to appeal to collectors. The cameo on the front is older and shows a sacrifice to the pagan god Pan. Inside is a modern metal mirror.

WB.169

4 Mermaid

Enamelled gold, emeralds and diamonds
French (?) 1800–1857

The mermaid is cast in gold and her body is set with 24 emeralds. Made as a fake before 1857, she was altered to make her more plausible as a Renaissance jewel before she was acquired by the Rothschilds.

WB.154

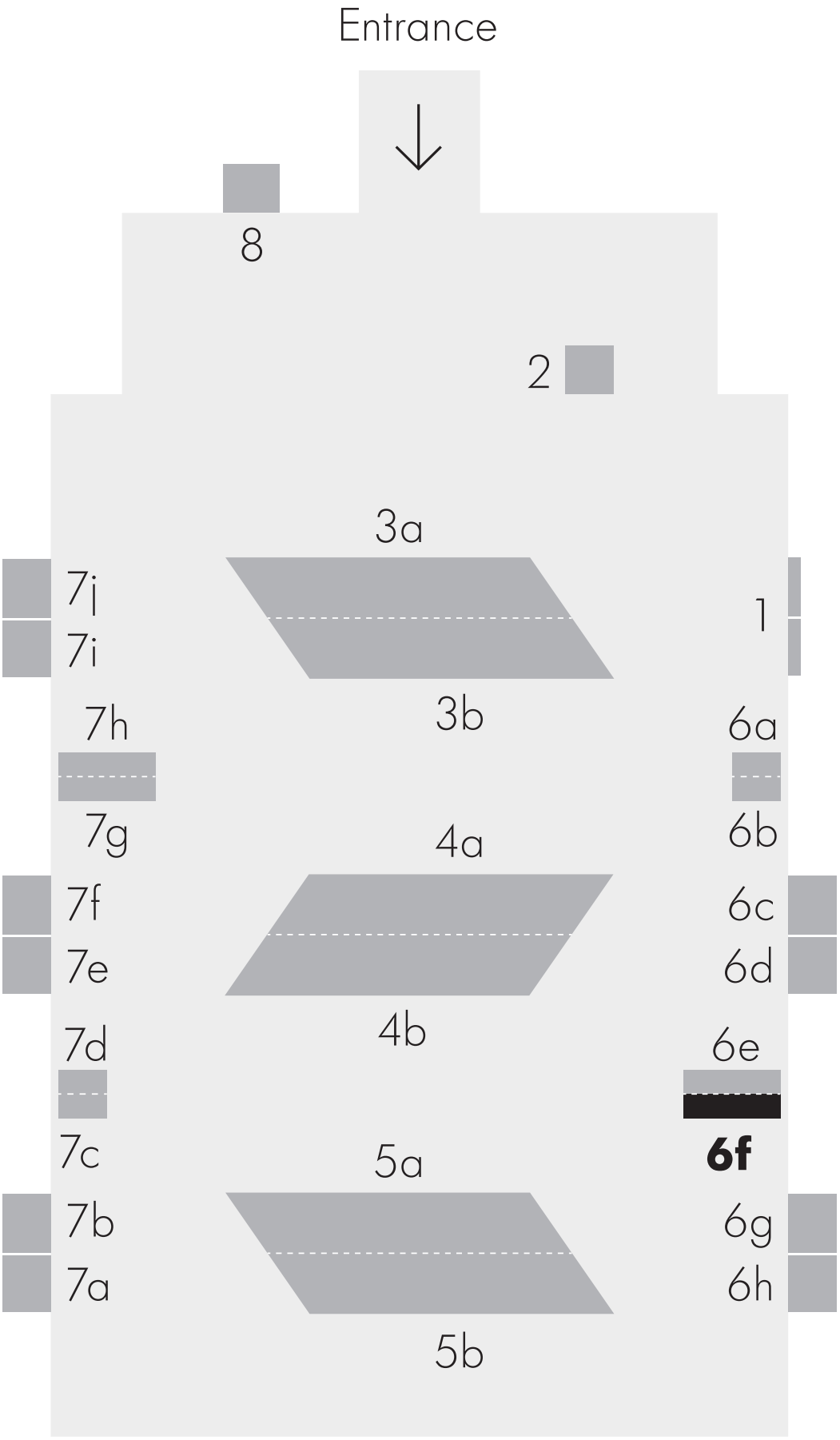
5 Hippocamp with a female rider

Enamelled gold, emeralds, pearls
Paris (?) 1800–1847

This jewel is set with 13 superb Columbian emeralds and a separately cast Native American rider. It appears to be a clever fake, made before 1847.

WB.156

Section 6f


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Portrait Miniatures

From the 1560s portrait miniatures set into superb jewelled cases were fashionable in England. They were tokens of love, allegiance and diplomacy. When Olivia gives a jewel to Viola in Shakespeare's play, *Twelfth Night*, the gift is clearly a portrait miniature: 'wear this jewel for me, 'tis my picture'. Specialist artists and craftsworkers, many of them immigrants, worked in teams to produce these luxury accessories in London and Paris around 1600.

1 The Lyte Jewel

Enamelled gold, set with diamonds
London, 1610–11

The locket contains a portrait by Nicholas Hilliard of James VI and I of Scotland and England. It was given by James to Thomas Lyte, author of a pedigree tracing James's ancestry back to Brute, the mythical Trojan founder of the British nation. It promoted James's rule as 'King of Great Britain', and the pedigree was displayed at Whitehall Palace. Lyte's own copy of the pedigree survives in the British Library.

WB.167

Thomas Lyte wearing the Lyte Jewel in an anonymous portrait dated 14 April 1611, showing him at the age of 43, oil on panel

© South West Heritage Trust (Museums Service)

2 The Grenville Jewel

Enamelled gem-set gold, pearl
Paris, 1635–40

The locket contains a miniature signed by David Des Granges of Sir Bevil Grenville (1596–1643). He was a Cornish Royalist general who was killed in 1643 in the English Civil War. The locket is referred to in his wife's will in 1647 and descended in the family until Baron Ferdinand acquired it in the 1890s.

WB.168

3 Portrait miniature locket

Enamelled gold and pearl
Paris or London, about 1610–20

The enamelling is of very high quality. It is close to designs by Corvinianus Saur, the Danish court goldsmith to King Christian IV of Denmark. The miniature has been replaced by a modern mirror.

WB.170

4 Toothpick

Enamelled gem-set gold, ‘baroque’ pearl
Italian or German, 1550–1600

Constructed around a ‘baroque’ pearl, this pick resembles a design published in 1562 by Erasmus Hornick in Nuremberg. Toothpicks were luxury items. This one may be a clever fake from the 19th century.

WB.188

5 Nereid and child

Enamelled gem-set gold, ‘baroque’ pearls
Germany, 1550–1600 or Paris, before 1872

Old and new elements appear to be bolted together on this jewel, which is constructed around two ‘baroque’ pearls.

WB.155

6 Monster fish and rider

Enamelled gem-set gold, pearls
Spain, 1550–1600 or Paris, 1820–98

The chains are modern and it belongs to a group which may have been made to deceive. Moulds for monster fish jewels survive from the Paris workshop of Alfred André (1839–1919).

WB.158

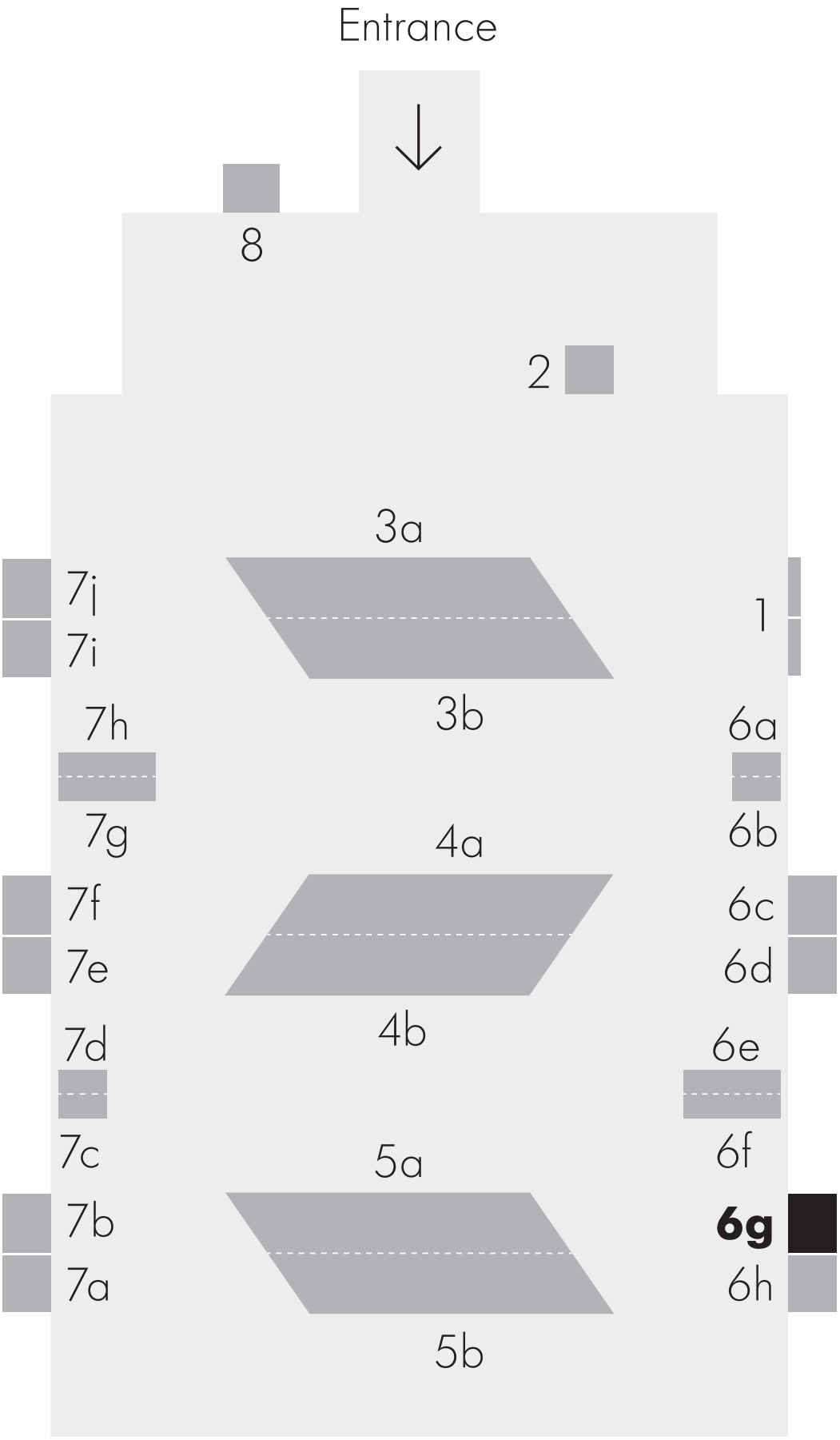
7 Hippocamp

Enamelled gem-set gold, pearls
Italian, 1550–1600 (?) altered 1820–57

This jewel is recorded in 1857 as a Renaissance treasure. It may be genuine with later repairs, or it may have been made as new before 1857.

WB.157

Section 6g


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Medals of honour

Gold portrait medals of rulers were made into enamelled pendants around 1600. They were worn on chains at the neck or waist, or sewn onto clothing as tokens of favour or political allegiance. The Waddesdon Bequest contains three superb examples of German jewels, known as *Gnadenpfennige* (1, 2, 5), and a miniature portrait of a contemporary man wearing a portrait medal around his neck (6).

1 Medal pendant
Probably Vienna, dated 1612

In the centre is a gold medal of Maximilian III (1557–1618) Archduke of Austria.

WB.180

2 Medal pendant
Enamelled gold, pearls
German, 1603–27

The medal shows Maurice, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel in the Holy Roman Empire, with his second wife, Juliana. They married in 1603. Known as 'Maurice the Learned' he was a great art patron. His court art collection, or *Kunstkammer*, was a model for the Rothschilds in the 19th century.

WB.178

3 Medal pendant
Enamelled gold, pearls
German, Berlin, 1608–19

In the centre is Johann Sigismund, elector of Brandenburg (1572–1619). From 1615 he allowed both Lutheran and Calvinist worship

in Brandenburg.

WB.179

4 Pendant with hawking party

Enamelled gold
Paris or London, 1825–57

Very similar to a fake jewel from the collection of Charles Sauvageot, a customs official and a violinist in the orchestra in the *Opéra Comique* in Paris. Sauvageot made a significant collection of Renaissance works of art, which he gave to the Louvre in 1856. Baron Ferdinand admired him as a collector.

WB.177

5 Pendant, the Coronation of the Virgin

Enamelled gold, pearl
German, 1550–1600 (?) or Paris, 1838–66

Either made as new in Paris or made from old and new elements, before it was recorded in 1866.

WB.176

6 Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange

Enamelled gold
Dutch, 1627, border: 1698

This portrait medal commemorates the Order of the Garter being conferred on Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange by King Charles I of England in 1627. The border was added in 1698 when the medal was presented by the jeweller Godard Verdion to his grandson as a treasured heirloom.

WB.173

7 Martin Luther

Enamelled and gem-set gold, heliotrope
Dutch or German, 1850–98

With a gold portrait of the Protestant reformer Martin Luther (1483–1546), founder of the Lutheran faith. The profile is probably copied from an engraved 'portrait' of 1710–20 by Adolph van Laan. The jewel was made in the Renaissance style in the mid-19th century.

WB.175

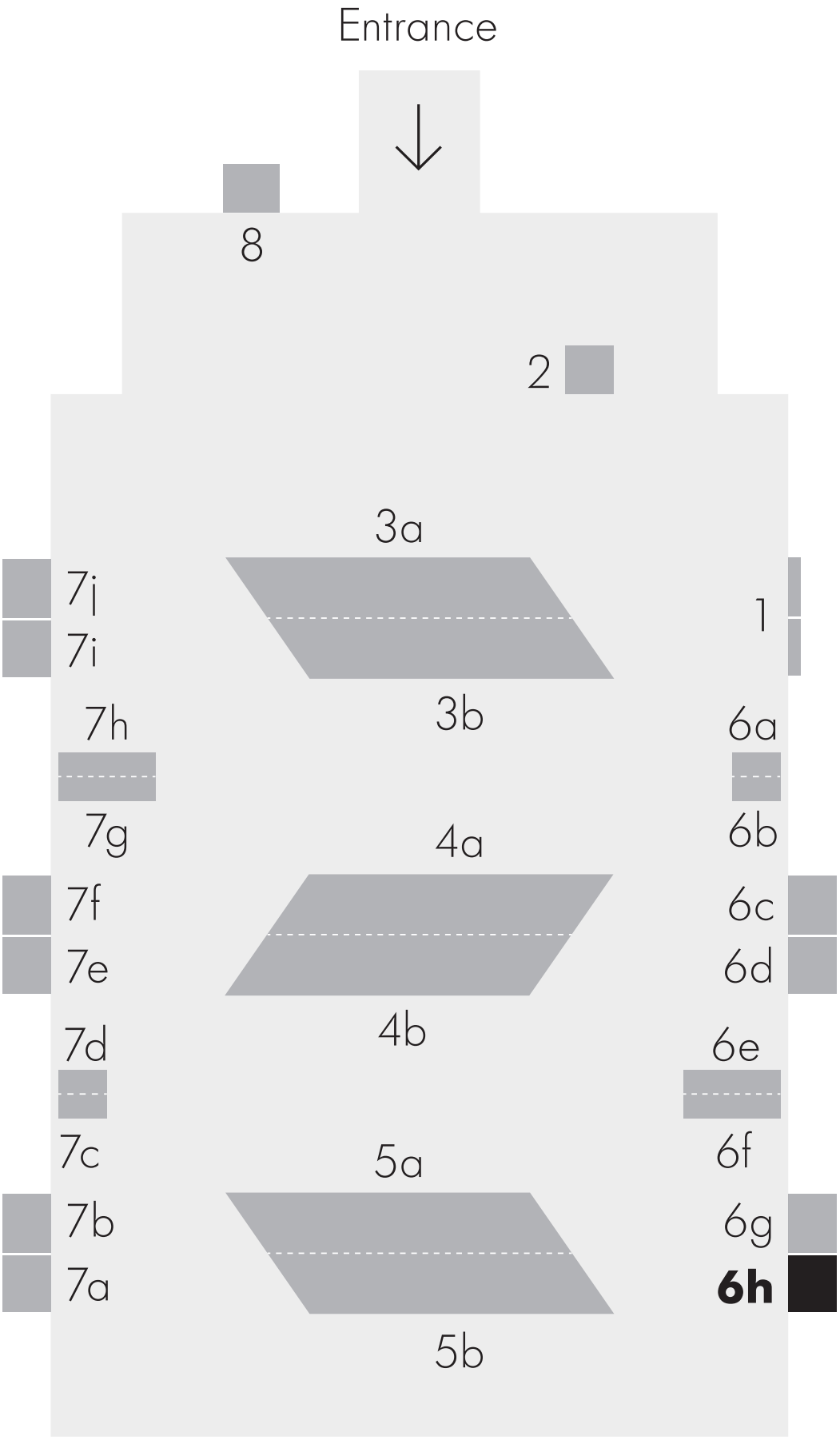
8 Portrait miniature of an unknown man

Painted on vellum, wooden frame
Dutch (?) 1600–1635

The sitter wears a gold portrait medal similar to 5 around his neck on a gold chain against his sober and expensive black clothes.

WB.174

Section 6h


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

The Pressburg Cup
Silver-gilt
Nuremberg, about 1600
Mark: Hans Petzolt

The Pressburg Cup is engraved around the lip with a Hebrew inscription, which records its ownership by the Burial Society of the Jewish community in Pressburg (modern Bratislava) in 1739–40. It is among the earliest silver cups known to have been used for this purpose. It is a rare piece of Judaica, collected by a family which has continued to maintain its Jewish identity.

WB.104

1 Jewish marriage-ring
Enamelled gold
Probably 1800–1898

Decorated with reliefs showing the creation of Eve, the Fall and the expulsion from the garden of Eden, with the Hebrew inscription 'Good luck' (*mazal tov*) engraved in the hoop.

WB.196

2 Jewish marriage-ring

Enamelled gold, filigree
Eastern European (?) 1700–1898

Jewish wedding rings survive from medieval hoards. Another was part of the *Kunstkammer* in Munich by 1598. This one represents a later type, possibly made for collectors in the 19th century, and may originally have been worn as a pendant. The authenticity of rings of this type was questioned as early as 1871.

WB.195

3 Circumcision knife

Enamelled gold, agate and steel
Attributed to workshop of Reinhold Vasters, Aachen, about 1850–93

Demand for Judaica (objects associated with Jewish faith and culture) stimulated faking in the 19th century. This knife has been attributed to the workshop of the notorious faker Reinhold Vasters, who ran a network of workshops supplying the art market.

WB.204

‘[When] my Father’s curiosities were packed and stored… it was my privilege… to place some of the smaller articles in their old leather cases, and then again… to assist in unpacking them and rearranging them… Merely to touch them sent a thrill of delight through my small frame.’

Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, 1897

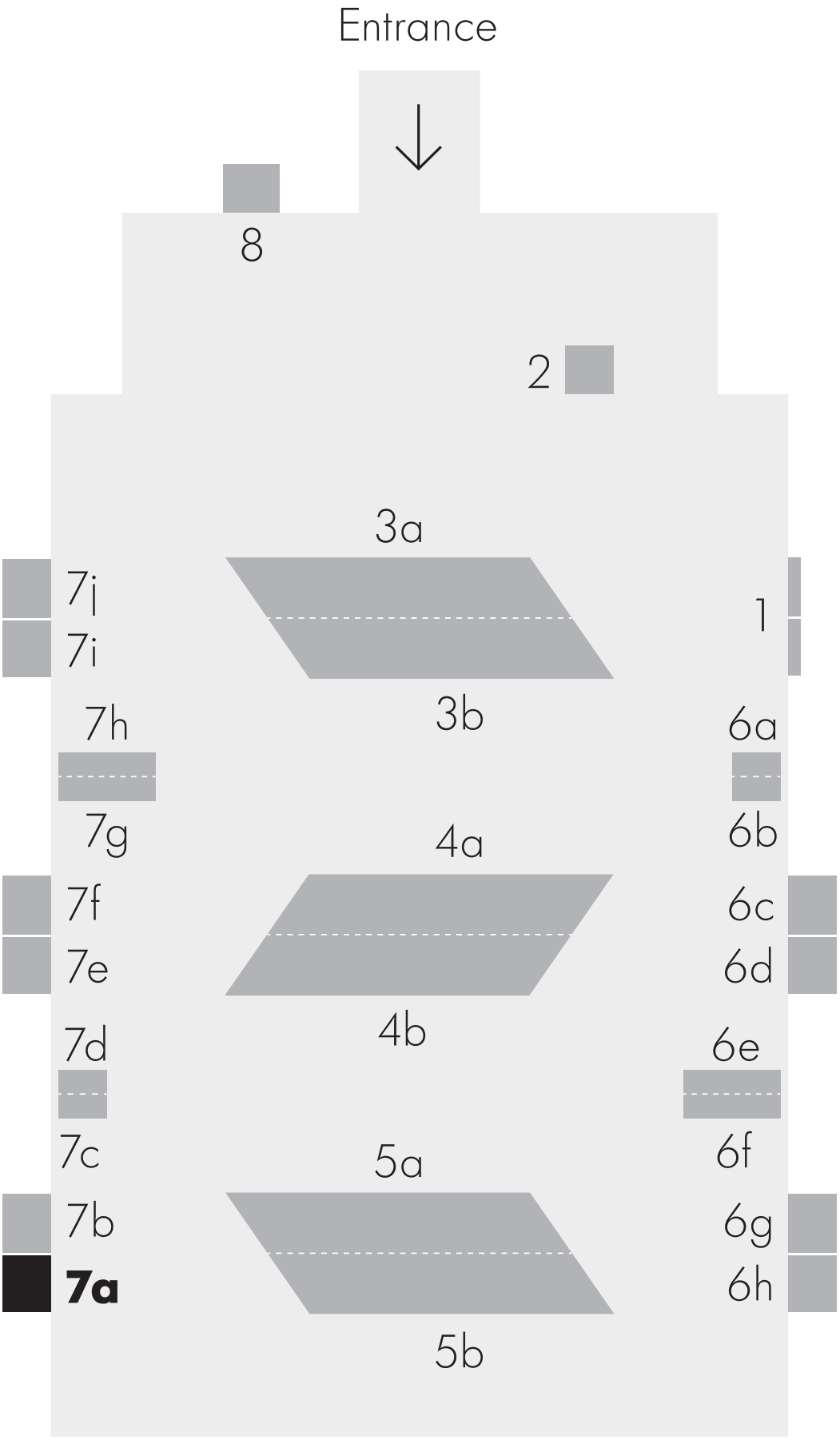
Right: Baron Ferdinand with his dog Poupon, photographed in The Baron's Room at Waddesdon Manor in 1897

© The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

Left: The New Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor, where the collection was displayed, photographed in 1897

© The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

Section 7a


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Two miniature vases

Rock crystal, enamelled gold
Rock crystal: 1600–1650,
mounts: Paris (?) 1825–75

The rock crystal engraving is different on the two vases. The addition of identical mounts made these into a pair for collectors.

WB.78a and WB.78b

2 Heron cup

Rock crystal, gem-set enamelled gold
German, 1850–72
Workshop of Reinhold Vasters, Aachen

Rock crystal cups of heron form were an important category in courtly art collections (*Kunstkammern*) in Renaissance and baroque Europe. This cup closely follows designs by Reinhold Vasters (1827–1909) which survive in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The designs are for the complete cup, the engraved bowl, and the enamelled mounts. Vasters carefully set out to deceive collectors. He deliberately cracked the bowl and engraved over the crack to make it look like old damage and repair.

WB.77

3 Ewer

Rock crystal, gem-set enamelled gold
Aachen, Paris or Vienna, 1860–75

Neither the form, the engraving nor the mounts accord with Renaissance practice. No definite attribution to a particular forger can yet be made.

WB.75

Plaque, The Sale of Cupids

Rock crystal, enamelled gold mounts
Rome or Vienna (?) about 1800–1830

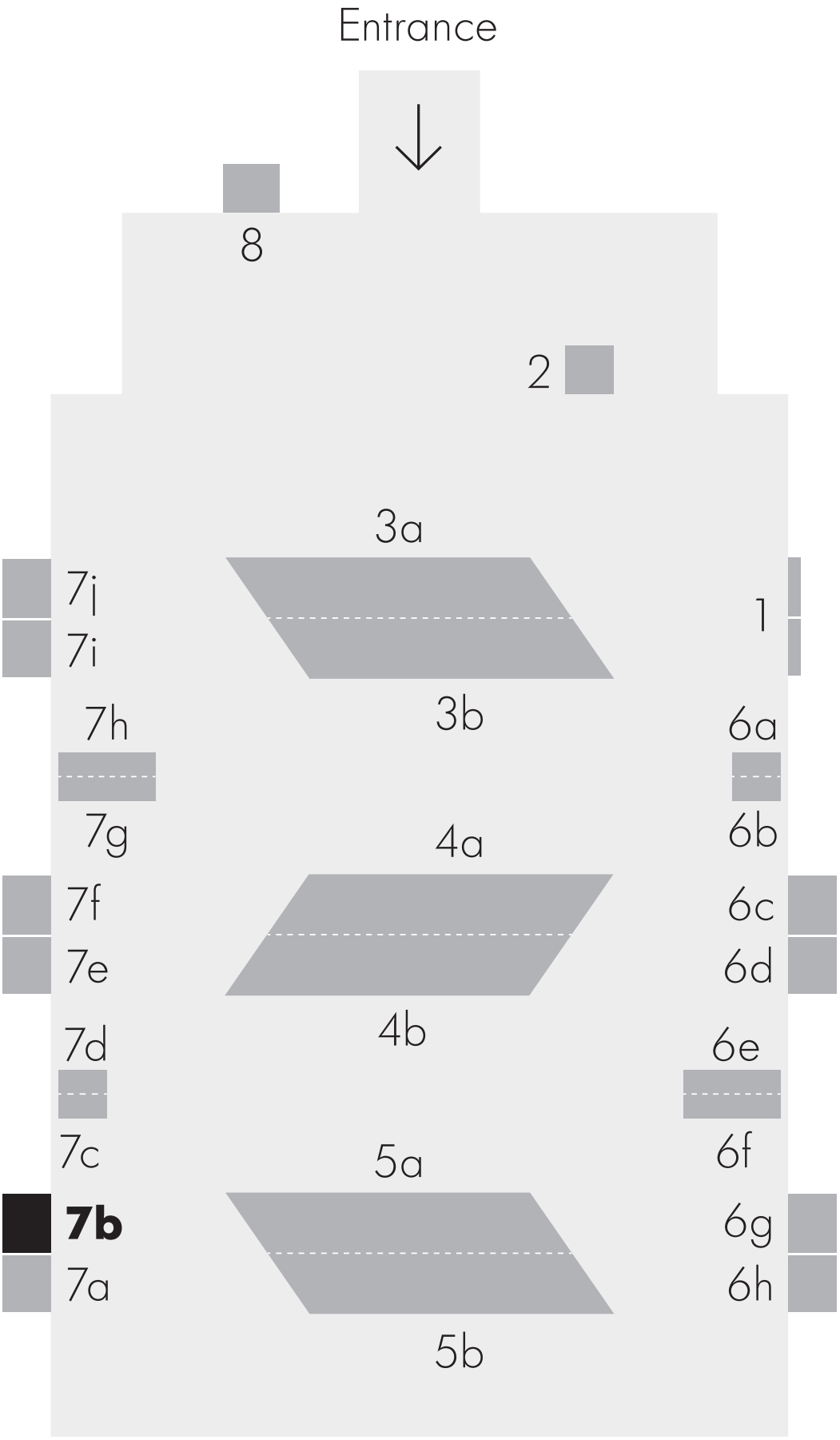
The scene is derived from an ancient Roman wall painting, discovered in Herculaneum in 1759. The sentimental subject became popular with European artists and was copied in painting, Wedgwood ceramic and engraving (see below). The crystal is close to the work of neo-classical gem engravers working in Rome and Vienna in the early 19th century.

WB.85

Sale of Cupids
Print by Jacques Firmin Beauvarlet (1731–97)
After Joseph-Marie Vien (1716–1809)

© The Trustees of the British Museum

Section 7b


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

The magic of rock crystal

Rock crystal has been prized in many world cultures for its purity. It was innately precious, and the cost and specialist skills in working it added to its prestige. As a form of quartz, it is one of the hardest minerals. Cutting and shaping it required huge grinding wheels and drills. As a luxury art form, it had been the exclusive privilege of princes and rulers from classical antiquity and had a special place in the *Kunstkammer* tradition of collecting in Renaissance and baroque courts.

1 Cup

Rock crystal, enamelled gold
Prague, about 1600
Miseroni workshop

One of a small group of exquisite rock crystal vessels made for the court of Rudolph II of Prague, which combine geometric carving with delicate engraving. Baron Ferdinand acquired this cup from Count Ervín II Nostitz of Prague after an exhibition of his collection in 1891.

WB.76

2 Cup

Rock crystal, enamelled gold
Milan, 1550–1600

The cup is engraved with dragons with intertwined necks on the curving scrolls of the lip. The separately carved baluster stem shows off the purity of the rock crystal. It represents taste in Milan around 1550, in contrast to the austere geometric style of 1, which was made in Prague after 1600.

WB.74

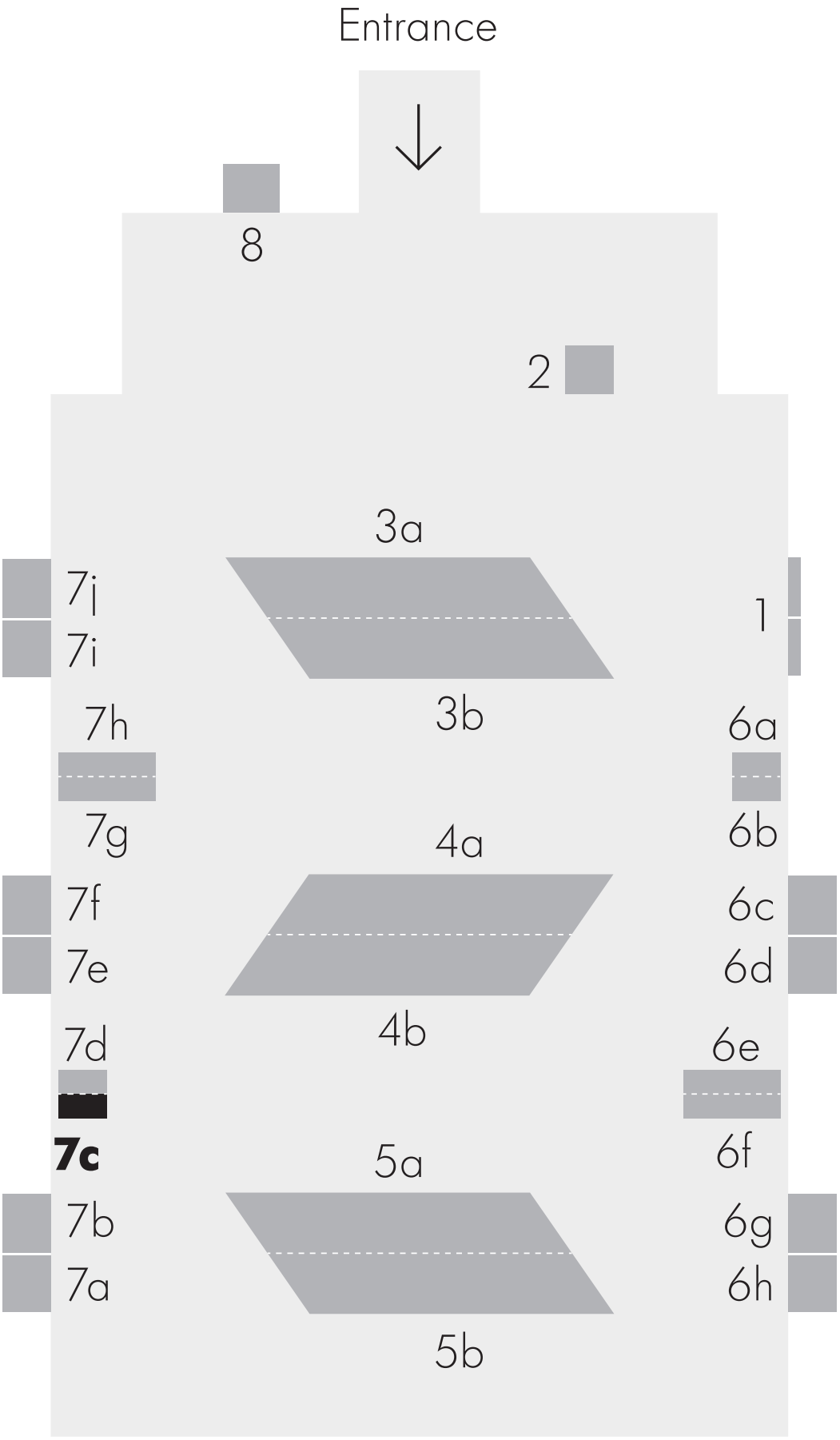
Medallion, a Roman sacrifice

About 1490–1546
Valerio Belli of Vicenza (1468–1546)

A Renaissance depiction of an ancient Roman sacrifice. It is engraved on the back of the rock crystal, to be seen to maximum effect from the front. Belli was a celebrated goldsmith and gem engraver with a cool elegant style based on classical models. In 1563 the architect Giovan Battista Bertani wrote that casts from Belli's engraved gems 'are sold in all the public places of Italy'.

WB.86

Section 7c


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Hercules and Achelous

Boxwood
Austria, 1650–75
Attributed to the Master of the Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian

One of the classical stories about Hercules the hero tells how he fought the river god Achelous over Deianira. Achelous lost, despite changing himself into a snake, then a bull. The bull's skin and horns are shown on the base of this vivid sculptural group. Hercules, in his lion skin, wrestles with Achelous, whose eyes roll upwards as if losing consciousness in his agony.

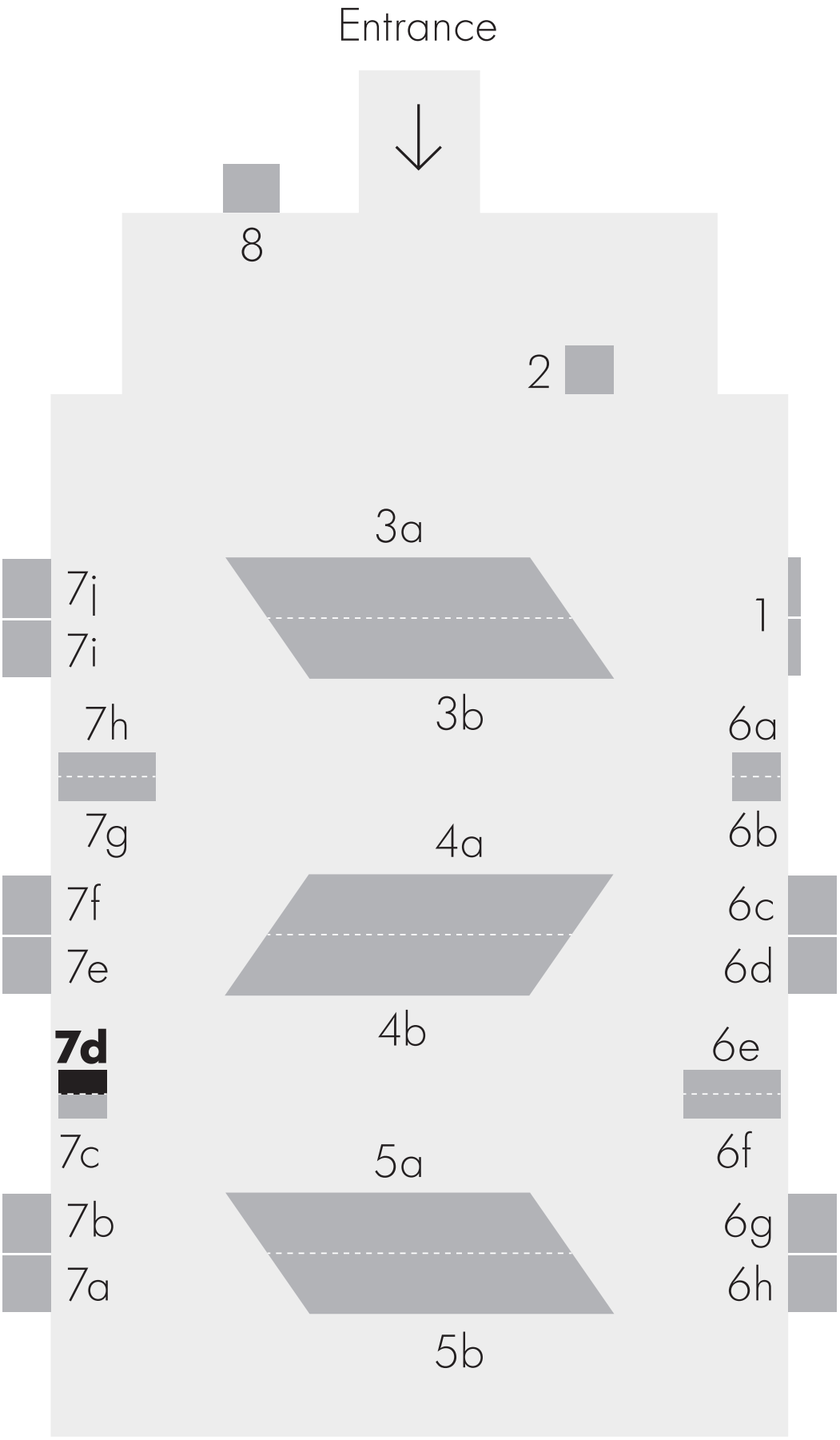
Baron Ferdinand's father, Baron Anselm, owned two copies of this sculpture. The boxwood version went to Baron Ferdinand, the ivory version went to his brother, Nathaniel, and is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

WB.262

Hercules and Achelous, ivory, Austrian, attributed to the Master of the Martyrdom of St Sebastian, 1650–75

© The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource/Scala, Florence

Section 7d


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

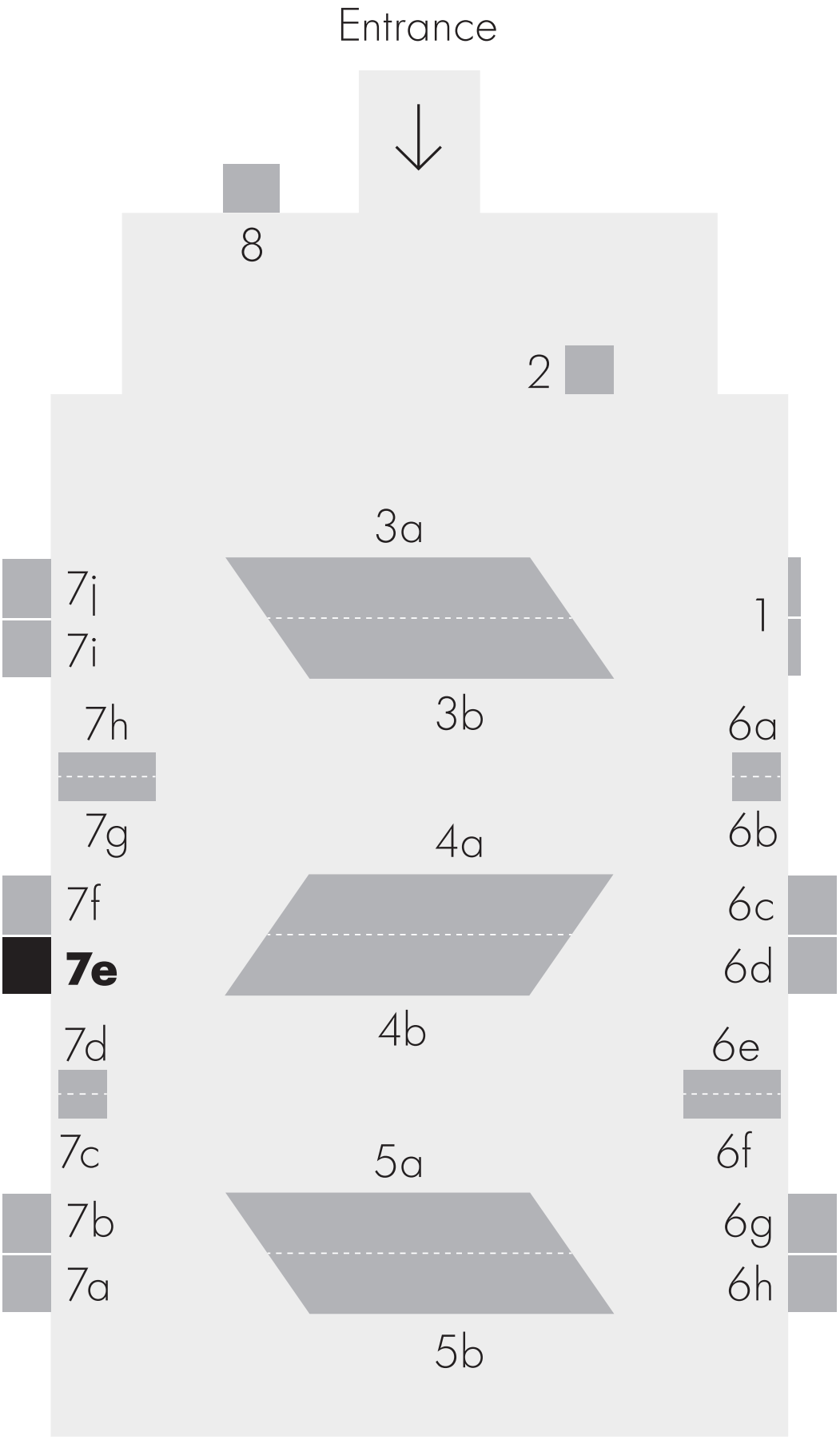
Omphale

Boxwood
Flemish, 1640–68
Artus Quellinus the Elder

Omphale, Queen of Lydia, is presented as a powerfully sensual woman. The classical hero Hercules fell in love with her. He was so infatuated that they exchanged clothes and he spun wool, traditionally a woman's task. Here Omphale wears her lover's lion skin and holds his club. The Flemish sculptor Artus Quellinus the Elder was a close associate of the painter, Rubens. This figure recalls Rubens' fleshy female nudes.

WB.263

Section 7e


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Bucket

Rock crystal, enamelled gold
Milan or Prague, 1600–1650

Carved with projecting rams' heads from one piece of rock crystal, full of flaws. The bowl is delicately engraved with a river scene with animals and birds. The handle is probably a later addition.

WB.80

2 Bowl

Rock crystal, enamelled gold mounts
Bowl: Mughal Indian, 1600–1700,
mounts: Indian (?) 1825–75

A false link with the Emperor Akbar (reigned 1556–1605) has been introduced by engraving his name in Arabic on the side. The mounts were possibly made in Jaipur.

WB.79

3 Lot and his daughters

Boxwood
Nuremberg, about 1540
Peter Flötner (1485?–1546)

In the biblical Book of Genesis God destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot's wife was killed during his family's escape. Lot's daughters thought he was the only man to survive. They seduced him by making him drunk and committed incest with him in an effort to perpetuate the human race. Flötner shows one daughter pouring wine into a cup for her drunken father while cities burn in the background.

WB.250

4 An Allegory of Bad Government

Honestone
Nuremberg, about 1540–46
Peter Flötner (1485?–1546)

A king squeezes a dripping sponge, watched by three richly dressed men. A jester points to a hill, where a man is about to be executed. The scene is an allegory of bad government from a famous Renaissance emblem book by Andrea Alciati. A bad king allows thieves to grow rich, then sends them to their death, and then to his own advantage, squeezes their riches like a sponge. Flötner was a versatile artist and designer of great influence. This unfinished model for a small emblematic relief is one of his most exquisite works.

WB.252

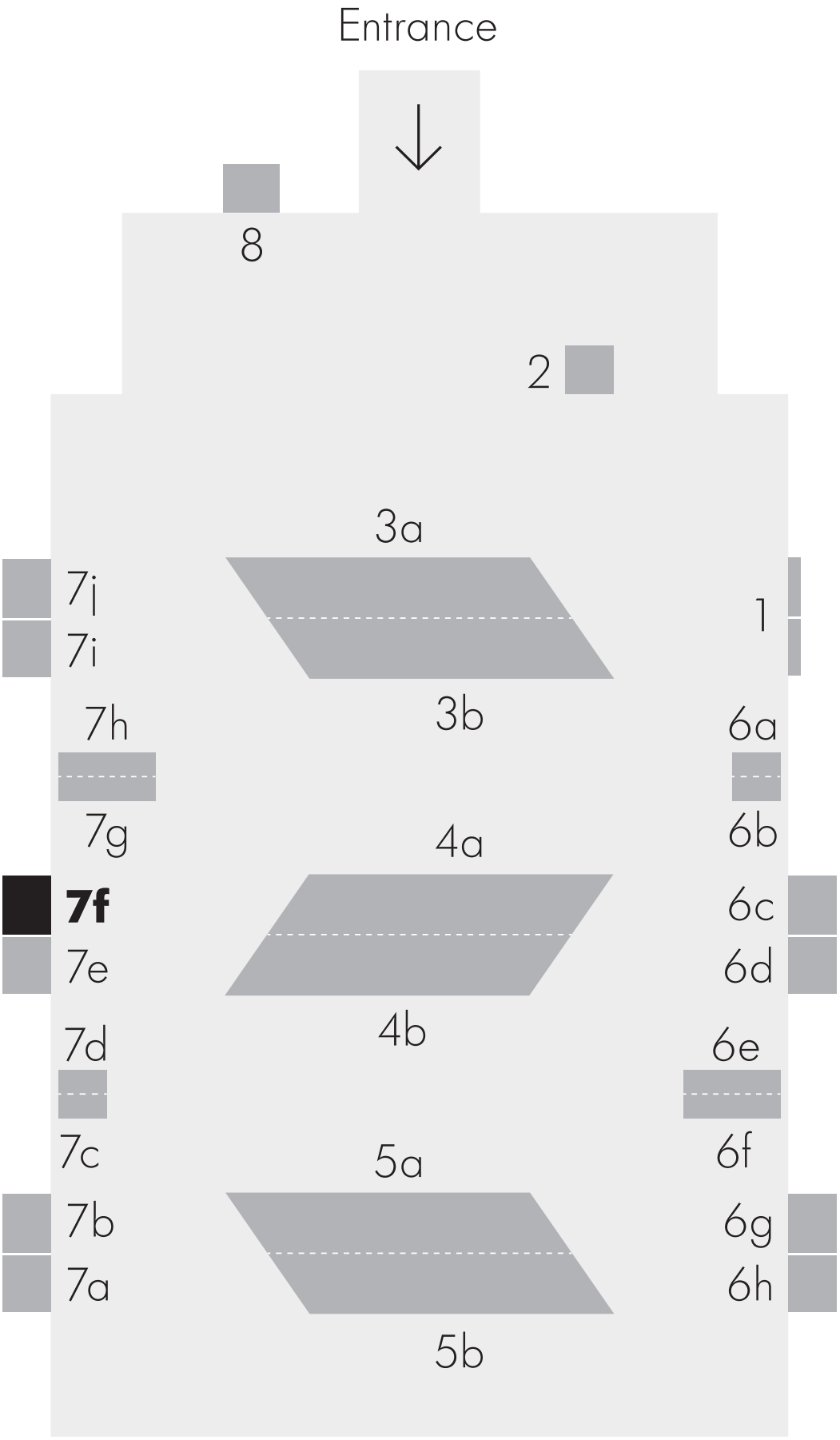
5 Portrait medal, Berchtold Holzschuher

Honestone
Nuremberg, dated 1566
Signed: 'M. S.'

Berchtold Holzschuher was born in Nuremberg and became its mayor in 1551.

WB.251

Section 7f


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Boxwood microsculpture

Around 1500, sculptors in the Northern Netherlands invented a new art form: microscopic sculptures carved in wood, which tell the Christian story and encourage the viewer to identify with its message. Made for private devotion and enjoyment, they are virtuoso masterpieces, which have always been treasured as objects of wonder and curiosity. The remarkable group in the Waddesdon Bequest are made of boxwood, a densely grained wood which can be carved in great detail. The altar shown here is one of the most splendid examples to survive.

Miniature altar-piece

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands, dated 1511

The altar is carved with scenes from the life and Passion of Christ. Doors open to reveal the Crucifixion, with detailed figures set within a vaulted interior. The inside of the doors show Christ Carrying the Cross on the left, and the Resurrection on the right. Beneath is the Last Supper. The disciples sit with Jesus behind a table, with Judas, who will betray Jesus, isolated at the front. Beneath is a small label dated 1511. Flanking the scene are playful cherubs and lions holding shields, which would originally have identified the patron for whom this sculpture was made.

WB.232

1 Finial with masks and figures

Boxwood
French, 1500–1550

WB.264

2 Miniature coffin

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands,
about 1500–1530

A Christian reminder of death (*memento mori*) and of judgement to come. The coffin opens to show two hinged leaves carved with a vision of Christ with saved human souls, and the damned surrounded by devils. A thin leaf inscribed in Latin 'Think on Death in order that you might live' lifts away, (shown here) revealing a chained, naked man lying in flames in the base.

WB.240

3 Medal, Maria of Austria

Boxwood
German or Austrian, after 1575

A copy of one side of Antonio Abondio's medal of 1575 which shows Maria of Austria and her husband, Maximilian II.

WB.249

4 Gaming piece

Boxwood
Augsburg, Germany about 1530–40
Circle of Hans Kels (died 1565/6)

The portrait is that of Sibylla, Duchess of Cleves. Kels made virtuoso art objects in wood for the Habsburgs. One gaming board had pieces portraying members of the Habsburg family, promoting their territorial and dynastic claims.

WB.248

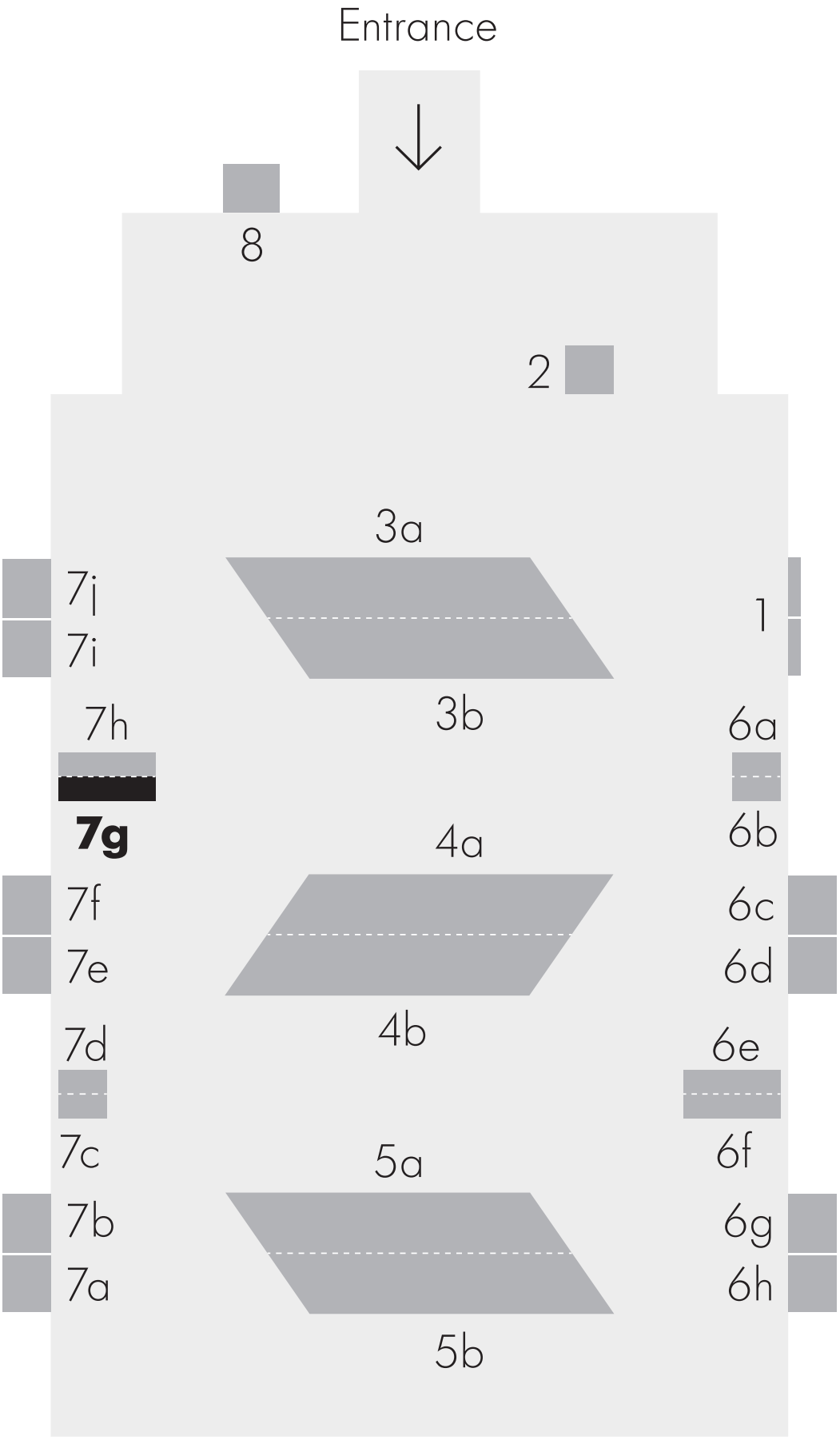
5 Gaming piece

Boxwood
Augsburg (?) about 1530–40

Inscribed 'Duke William'. Like 3, this is from a set of gaming pieces with portraits of contemporary rulers. Raised borders protect the portrait when in use.

WB.247

Section 7g


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Ring with boxwood pendant

Boxwood: 1800–1898, ring: Italian, 1400–1450 with ancient intaglio gem

The carving appears to be a fake. The genuine finger-ring was an integral part of the deception.

WB.231

2 Devotional pendant

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands, about 1510–25

Carved with the Mass of St Gregory on the inside, and the Annunciation on the outside, with a Latin inscription. The scene inside was originally protected by a sliding door, which is now missing.

WB.241

3 Devotional pendant

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands, about 1510–14

On the outside is carved the Marriage of the Virgin, and the Virgin and Child with St Elizabeth. The pendant opens to reveal St Jerome in penitence in the upper half. In the lower half is the Crucifixion with the patrons included, kneeling as witnesses. They are identified by their coats of arms as Dismas de Berghes, a nobleman in Northern Brabant, and his wife Marie Laurweryn, who married in 1510. It could have been a betrothal or wedding gift to Marie.

WB.239

Devotional toys

Prayer nuts were a new art form around 1500: beads of boxwood, made of turned wood, which fit neatly in the hand. They were hollowed out, hinged and set with tiny carved devotional scenes, which would be revealed on opening the nut. The carver used a slot at the top or side to undercut details, or work almost three-dimensional elements from the back. Unfolding the nut was in itself an act of prayer. Nuts could be hung on a string of prayer beads. Perfume placed in the openwork casing enhanced their appeal and value as luxury accessories.

4 Prayer nut

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands, about 1510–25

The prayer nut opens in the hand to reveal the Adoration of the Magi in the upper half. In the lower half is the Pietà with St James the Greater and St Ursula, the name saints of the patrons Jacques de Borsele and his wife Ursula de Foreest. The patrons are included in the scene, kneeling as witnesses. They are identified by their coats of arms on the shields in the foreground.

WB.238

5 Prayer nut

Boxwood
Flemish, about 1510–25

The prayer nut opens out to reveal Christ bearing the Cross in the upper half and the Crucifixion in the lower half. The same scenes are combined on other prayer nuts as prompts to prayer. The Latin inscriptions from the Bible and a hymn in praise of the Cross were chosen to strengthen the viewer's identification with Christ's suffering.

WB.235

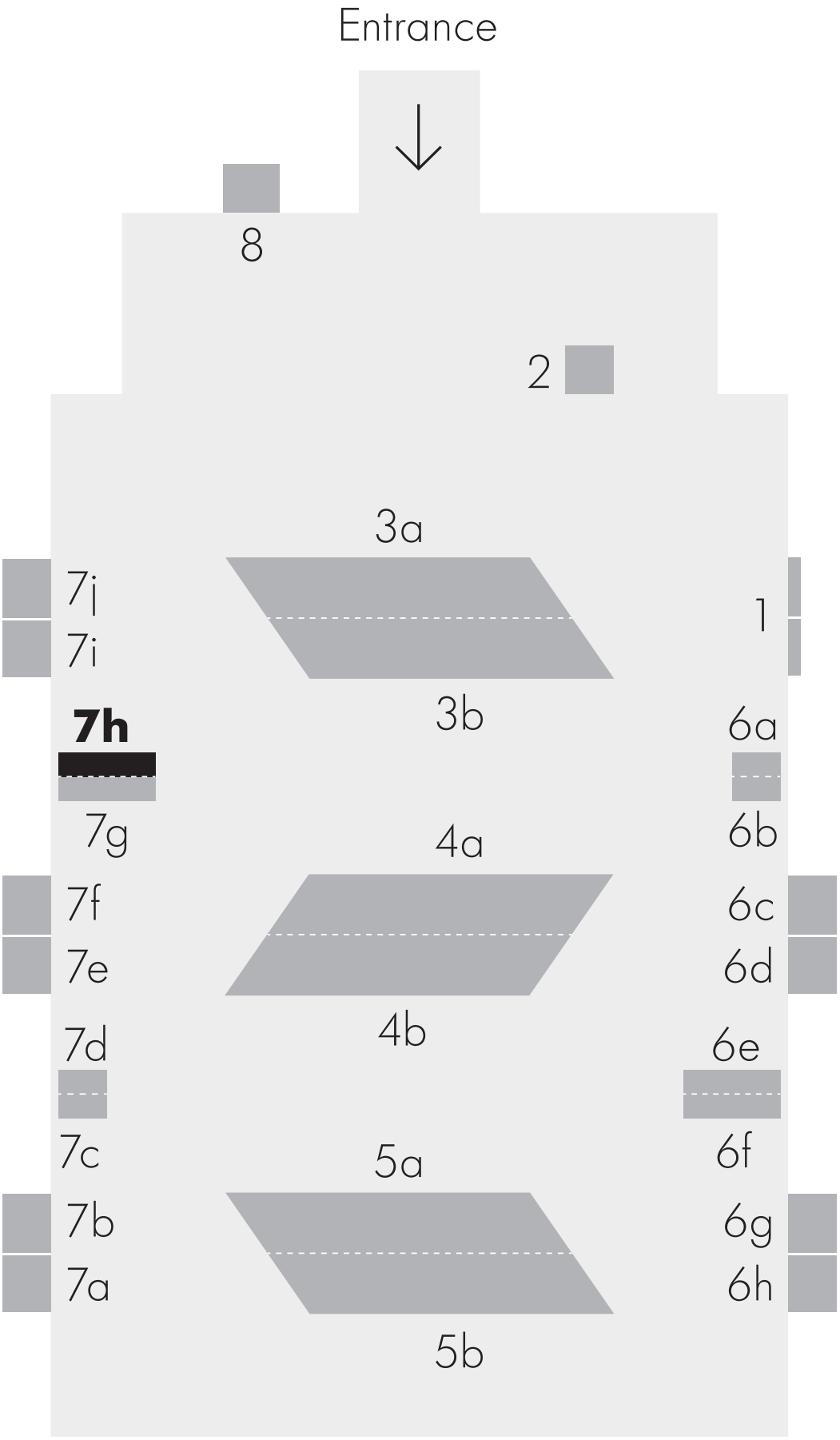
6 Prayer nut

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands, about 1510–25

In the top half St Hubert sees a vision while out hunting of the crucified Christ in the antlers of a stag. In the lower half St Hubert is enthroned as a bishop.

WB.237

Section 7h


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

Aids to prayer

Microsculpture was a specialised art form of around 1500–1530. Boxwood is a dense wood which can be finely carved to make small devotional objects, which were always admired and preserved. Miniature altarpieces or tabernacles were protected by leather cases (3). They were made for the most famous art patrons, including the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Their scale, ingenuity and virtuosity made them obvious choices for courtly art collections (*Kunstkammern*). In the 19th century only the wealthiest collectors, such as the Rothschilds, could afford them.

1 Prayer nut

Boxwood
Northern Netherlands, about 1510–25

The prayer nut opens out in layers in the hand. Doors open in the top half to reveal a crowded Crucifixion scene, alive with detail. The lower half is protected by a flap carved with the Nativity. The flap opens to reveal Christ carrying the Cross. The ring on the case allows the prayer nut to be worn around the neck or on a belt as an aid to prayer and as a luxury accessory.

WB.236

2 Perfume flask

Boxwood
South German, dated 1688

Carved with the figures of Faith, Hope and Charity and the shield of Austria. The upper part takes the form of a crown.

WB.265

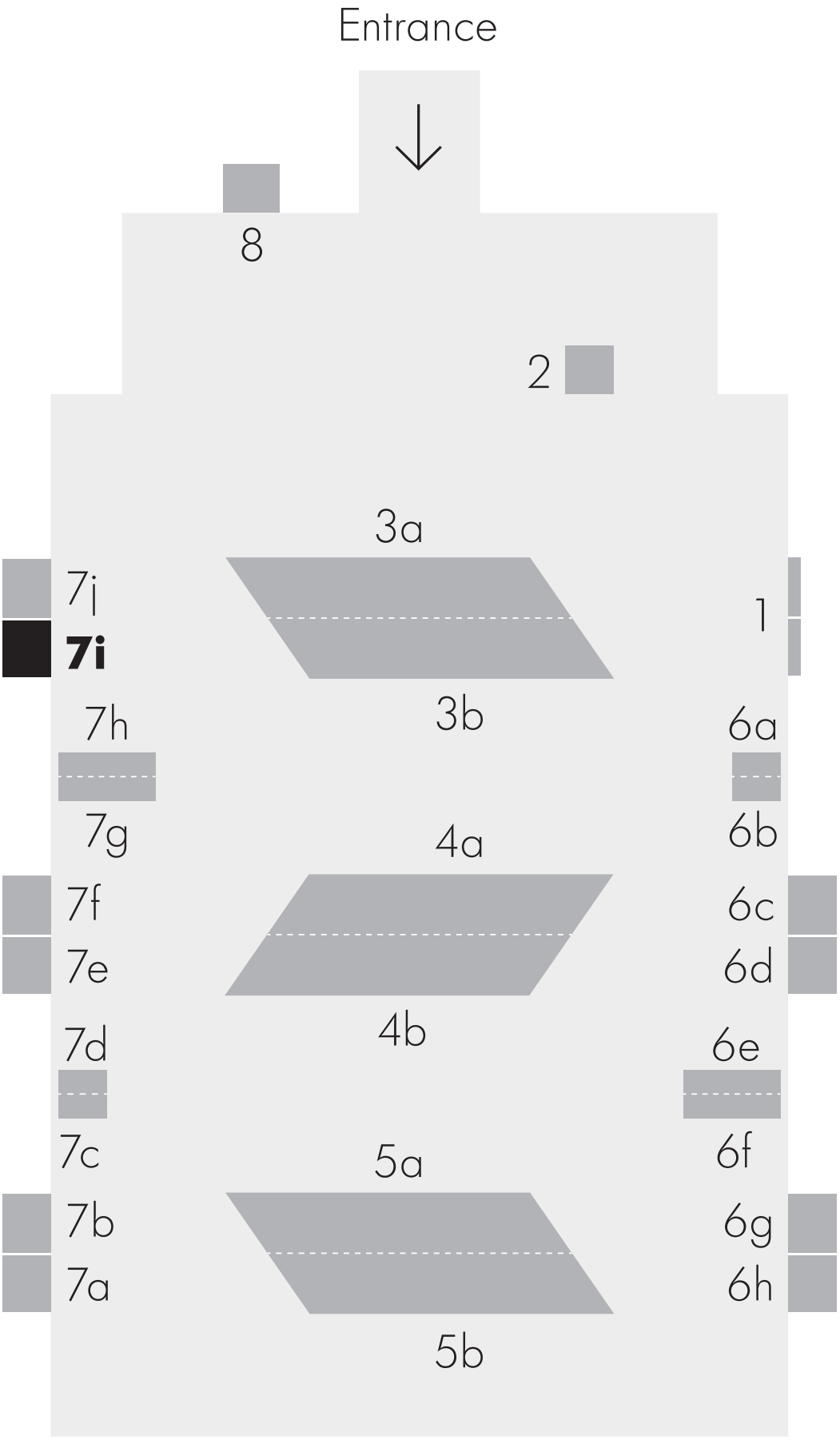
3 Miniature tabernacle and case

Boxwood, leather, gold fittings
Northern Netherlands, 1510–1525

The tabernacle is carved with scenes from the life of Jesus. It was designed as an interactive aid to prayer, which comes apart and opens like a flower to reveal more and more areas of minute carving. Inside the pinnacle, the Virgin and Child can be raised by a ratchet. The central element is a prayer nut. The tabernacle may have been owned by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V (reigned 1519–53) whose arms appear on the case.

WB.233

Section 7i


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Portrait of a young man, aged 18

Pear wood
Southern German, dated 1625 (?)

Carved in high relief and partly in openwork with a detailed half-length of a young nobleman. The arms and crest are those of the Van Arkel family of Holland.

WB.258

2 Portrait of Wolfgang Thenn, aged 31

Pear wood
South German, dated 1531 or
a fake made before 1866

The portrait is dated 1531, but it might be an accomplished fake, made shortly before it was acquired by the Rothschilds in 1866.

WB.257

The lure of amber

Amber is fossilised conifer resin. Rare and precious, it was washed up on the eastern and southern shores of the Baltic near Königsberg (Kaliningrad) and Danzig (Gdansk). Königsberg was a centre for trade in amber, which was prized as a diplomatic gift and traded across Europe. Carved amber, exploiting the different colours of the material, was particularly prized in the European *Kunstkammer* as a wonder of nature.

3 Tankard

Amber, silver-gilt
Königsberg (modern Kaliningrad) 1640–60

The arms of the Swedish royal house of Vasa are set into the lid. The tankard probably belonged to the great collector Queen Christina of Sweden (reigned 1632–54). The panels around the body are carved with female figures representing the Seven Deadly Sins: Pride, Gluttony, Lechery, Sloth, Wrath, Envy and Avarice.

WB.229

4 Casket

Amber, silver-gilt
Amber: Königsberg (modern Kaliningrad) about 1600, mounts: Paris (?) 1825–75

The casket is set with seven amber plaques. They are engraved on the reverse, in a similar way to rock crystal plaques, with female nudes lying in landscapes.

WB.221

5 Model for medal of John of Leyden

Boxwood
German, dated 1535
Attributed to Hans Schwartz

Jan Bockelson, called Jan van Leyden, (1509?–1536) was the leader of the Anabaptists, a radical religious sect in Münster, Germany. They expelled Catholics and Lutherans from the town and made Bockelson their king. They were executed in January 1536. The cages in which their bodies were later displayed can still be seen on the tower of St Lambert's church in Münster.

WB.242

6 Gaming piece with portrait of a woman

Boxwood
German, about 1550–75

WB.245

7 Model for medal of Hans Hauschel, aged 24
Boxwood
German, dated 1544

Like 5 this is a model of a medal to be cast in bronze or precious metal. Pieces cast from it have survived.

WB.243

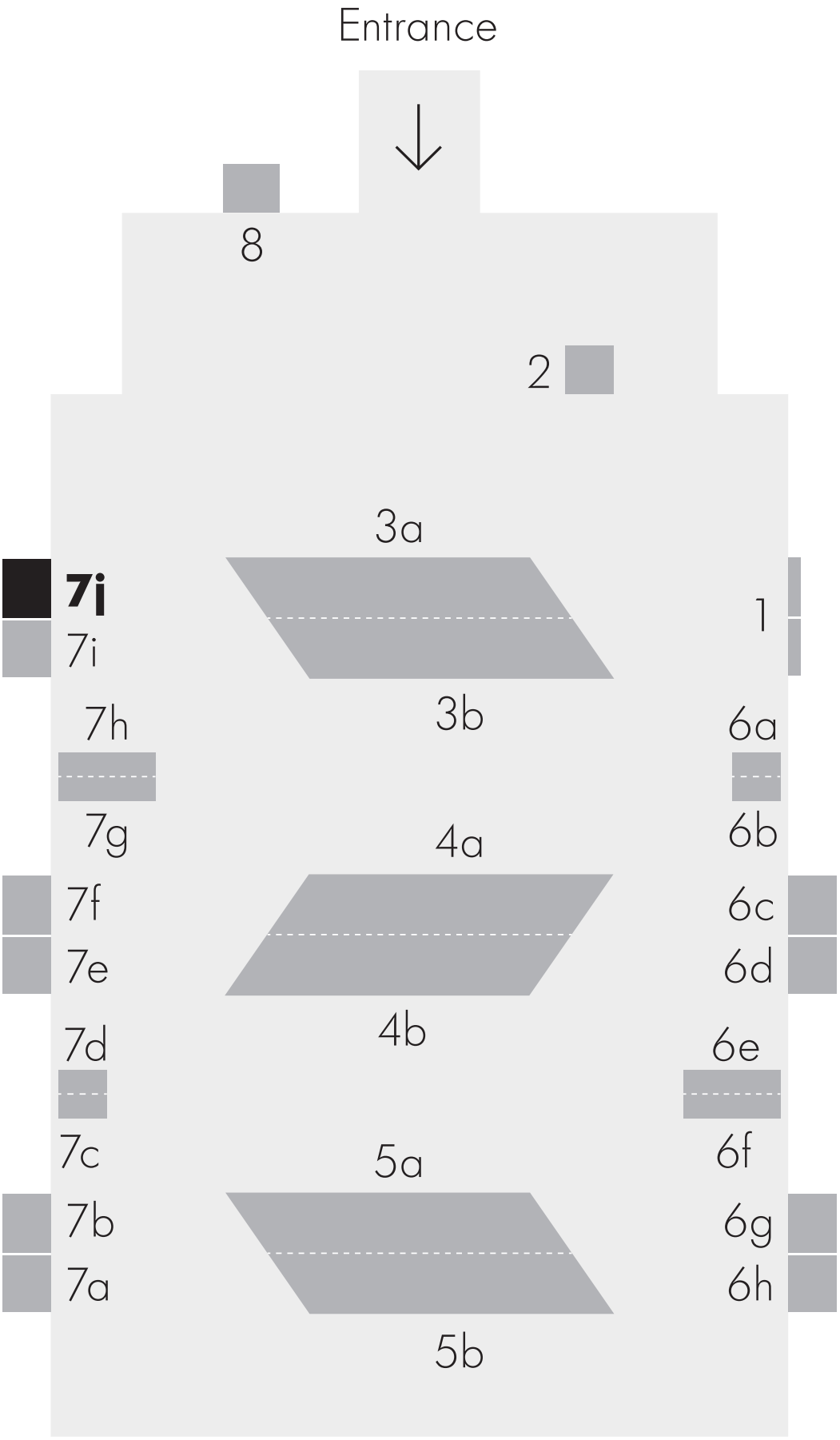
8 Portrait medallion of Francis I
Boxwood
French, 1515–1600

WB.246

9 Model for medal of Goedart van den Wier
Boxwood
Lower Rhine or Netherlands, 1541–2

WB.244

Section 7j


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

1 Pendant watch

Enamelled gold and rock crystal
Paris (?) about 1825–75

An accomplished 19th-century fake, made in the style current around 1620. The large rock crystal on the cover has been set over red foil to look like a ruby. The spectacular enamelling of the watch case, both inside and out, is closely based on printed designs of the 1620s, like the one below.

WB.189

Engraved design by Pierre Nolin, dated 1619, the kind of source used by 19th-century enamellers when making fake jewels

© The Trustees of the British Museum

2 An oriental prince

Enamelled gold, pearl and diamonds
German, 1650–1700

This miniature figure represents the taste for the exotic and oriental in the courts of Dresden and Vienna from around 1650.

WB.190

3 Transylvanian gold cup

Enamelled gold, gold brocade, jewels, seed pearls
Transylvania, 1600–1700, finial 1800–1898

The bowl is covered in gold brocade, embroidered with seed pearls and set with brooches and gems. Its richness identifies it as Transylvanian. It was made when the Ottoman Turks controlled most of Hungary, apart from mountainous Transylvania. The courts of Dresden and Vienna had a particular taste for this kind of exotic jewelled work.

WB.66

Portrait medals

The portrait medal was a new art form invented in Renaissance Italy. Cast in silver, bronze or lead, medals passed from hand to hand as the currency of fame. They were hung on walls, like paintings, or worn as jewels. German medals were cast from fine-grained stone or wooden models carved by goldsmiths, die-engravers or sculptors. They are linear in style and highly detailed as portraits of individuals. Models were kept to be used again, or framed and displayed as independent works of art for the collector.

4 Model for medal of Sigismund Pfinzing

Honestone
German, 1553
Joachim Deschler

Pfinzing (1479–1554), from a prominent Nuremberg family, is shown at the age of 79. The medallist, Deschler (died 1571), became a citizen of Nuremberg in 1537 and specialised in medal portraits of its citizens. Framed in gilt wood (like 6) as a family or collector's piece.

WB.255

5 Model for medal of Christopher Tetzel

Honestone
German, 1500–1573
Signed: 'H. B.' (Hans Bolsterer)

Tetzel, a member of one of Nuremberg's oldest families, is shown at the age of 54. Bolsterer (died 1573) was much admired as a medallist in Nuremberg.

WB.256

6 Model for medal of Paul Meysinger

Honestone
German, inscribed 1579

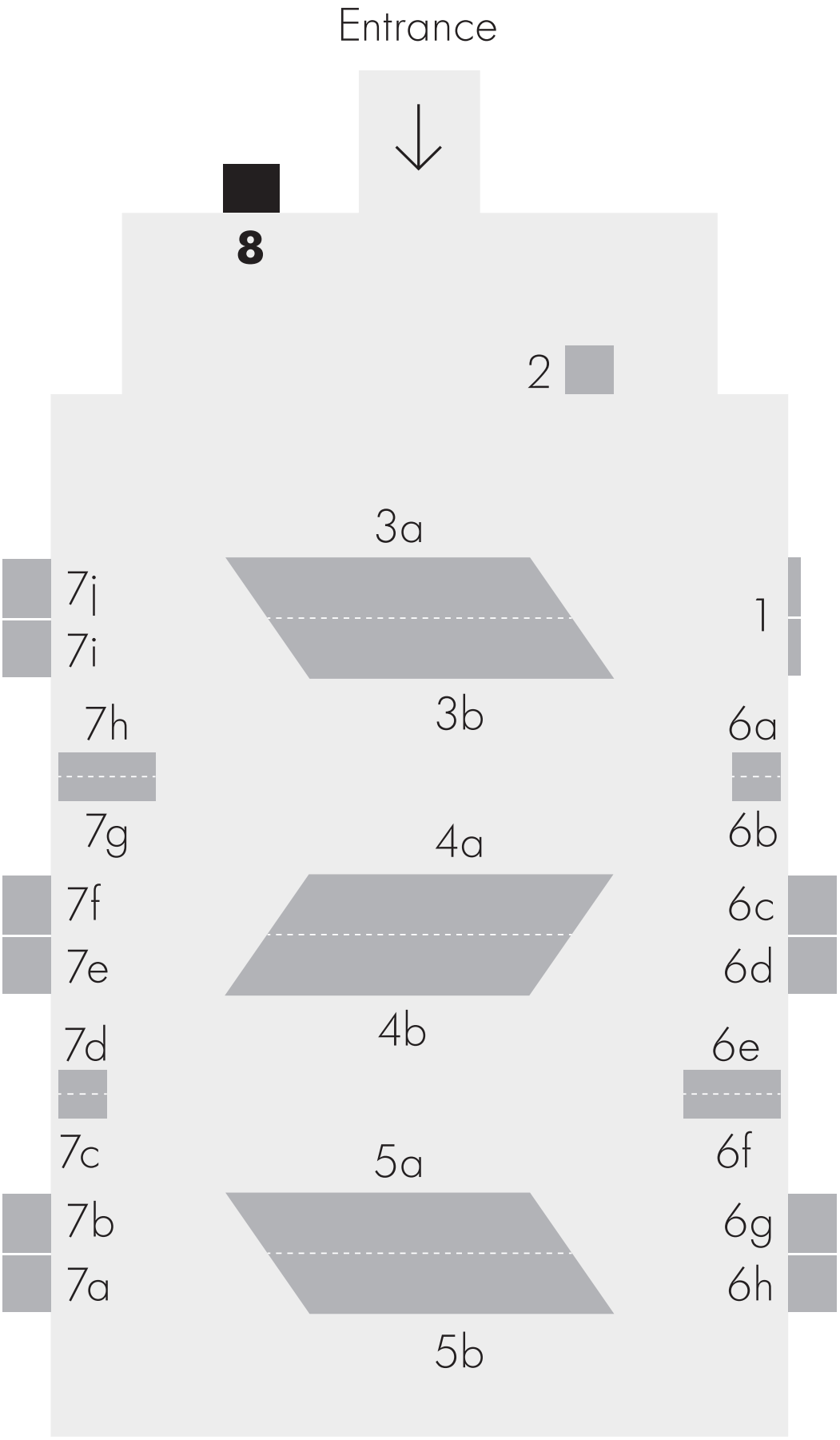
Honestone (*Solnhofen*) was used for delicate and detailed carving, as in the gold chains around Meysinger's neck.

WB.254

‘Waddesdon Manor is the last of its kind of the 45 houses which the Rothschilds built in the 19th century. The collection at Waddesdon remains intact and illustrates the extent to which our family collected.’

Lord Rothschild, 2015

Section 8


Entrance
8
2
3a
7j
7i
1
3b
7h
6a
7g
6b
4a
7f
6c
7e
6d
4b
7d
6e
7c
6f
5a
7b
6g
7a
6h
5b

The Lycurgus Cup

Silver, glass
Late Roman Empire, AD 300s

This magnificent glass cage-cup is an incredibly rare collector's piece. The glass from which it is made contains tiny amounts of gold and silver which cause it to change colour from opaque green to translucent red when light is shone through it.

The cup is decorated with scenes from the myth of Lycurgus, king of Thrace. Lycurgus attacked Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, and his followers. The nymph Ambrosia prayed to Mother Earth for help and was transformed into a vine which trapped Lycurgus in its coils.

Made for ancient Roman banqueting, the cup must always have been treasured. It is not part of the Waddesdon Bequest, but was acquired by Lionel de Rothschild (1808–1879), who became the first professing Jew to serve as a Member of Parliament in the House of Commons in 1858. Lionel was both uncle and father-in-law to Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, who admired him greatly as a collector and corresponded with him about his purchases and the nature of the contemporary art market.

From the collection of Victor, Lord Rothschild, purchased with the aid of the Art Fund
BEP 1958,1202.1

ArtFund